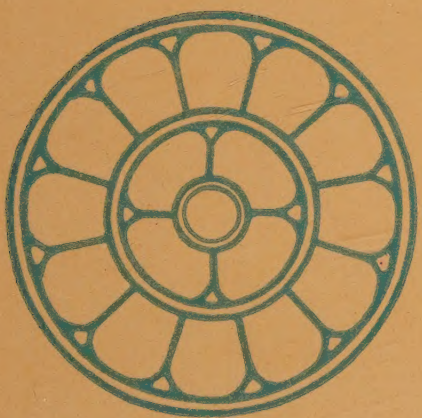
# The ADVENT

*A Quarterly Devoted to the Exposition of Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future*



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# *The Advent*

He who now stares at the world with ignorant eyes,
Hardly from the Inconscient's night aroused,
That look at images and not at Truth
Can fill those orbs with an immortal's sight.

SAVITRI, BOOK IV CANTO 3

# The ADVENT

April 1948

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Yet shall the godhead grow within your hearts,
You shall awake into the spirit's air
And feel the breaking walls of mortal mind
And hear the message to which life was dumb
And look through Nature with sun-gazing lids
And blow your conch-shells at the Eternal's gate.

SAVITRI, BOOK IV CANTO 3

ASCENT TO THE TRUTH
*By The Mother*

Vol. V. No. 2 April 1948

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# The ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

## EDITORIALS

### CHILDREN AND CHILD MENTALITY *

CHILDREN are often found to be very cruel to animals. Why is it so? Their treatment of birds especially is notorious. To seek out nests and pull them down, to capture nestlings and put them to all kinds of torture, to pick up eggs and dash them to pieces are for children most interesting games. They seem to take particular delight in varying and enhancing as much as possible the torture they can inflict. One reason that can be adduced for the callousness of a child's sensibility is his self-centredness: he is wholly himself, isolated from others, has not yet learnt the social needs and virtues. All he does and feels is for himself, for his own pleasure and free self-assertion. His growing individuality, in order to grow, cuts itself aloof from others and loses the sense of others having the same value as itself. Being self-regarding, to that extent he ceases to be other-regarding. Fellow-feeling is a sentiment that grows later on, as the result of shocks in mutual interchange. Real sympathy is a movement of mature consciousness.

The inquisitiveness that so strongly possesses a child is also the drive of an awakening and growing consciousness. He indulges in breaking, tearing, ripping because of this curiosity, this keen edge of a developing and experimenting consciousness. It seems to be hard and unfeeling, even an aberration, precisely because of the egocentric nature of the child consciousness yet unfamiliar with values normal to age and experience.

But if it is nature to a certain extent that makes the child so apathetic, self-regarding and cruel, it is not the only cause and it is not the whole

* Based upon a talk with the Mother.

story. There are other very active factors in life that affect and mould the child's consciousness from the very beginning.

The child, we can take, comes into the world with a more or less clean slate to record the reactions of life. In the early period he is still nearer his psychic being which is not yet thrown back or covered over by the impacts and impressions of the world. The first conscious contacts with the world are not generally happy for the child. He meets things all around that go against the grain of his still sensitive psychic consciousness. The first quarrel he witnesses between his parents, the first rough behaviour or movement of an elder that shakes his attention, the first lie that he hears uttered by his teacher, act almost as shell-shocks to his nerves. And as he grows, lessons like these are rained upon him from all sides and it is no wonder that his consciousness very soon gets warped and twisted, he too begins his own game in the line he sees and experiences. Only, not being guided or controlled by reason and experience, he overdoes the thing, and because of his age, what in an adult is a matter of course, small and insignificant, looms large and ominous in his case. The surroundings in which a child lives and grows form the atmosphere which he breathes in at every moment and if there is poison in it, he inhales and imbibes the poison which becomes part of his substance and nature. A pure environment is needed for a pure life impulse to shape and develop.

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What is the very central character of the child consciousness? It is confidence in life, the surety that nothing can baulk the fulfilment of life's purpose, the trust that overrides all set-backs and stumbles, gaily passes through dangers and difficulties. This confidence, this assurance the very body shares in and impels it to movements of daring and adventure. It is this that is the cause of the body's growth, and so long as it is maintained, keeps the body young. So the poet says:

A simple child
That feels its life in every limb
What should it know of death?

Age sets in precisely when there is a fall in this self-confidence and assurance of the body consciousness, when the body begins to fear, becomes too cautious and apprehensive. A wound, a cut, even a broken limb would not stop a child normally to go forward with the same dash and carelessness. And that character is the source not only of his physical fitness and growth, but also that of a mental alacrity and soundness which is an inestimable

possession of the child consciousness. The wisest teacher is he who does not teach too much the wisdom of prudence and moderation, but encourages this *élan vital*, the life urge, in the child and yet seeks to organise and canalise it, as an efficient instrument of high ideals and purposes.

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There are two failings which a teacher must guard against—to which he is usually prone—if he wishes to secure respect and obedience and trust from children: (1) telling a lie and (2) losing temper. A child can easily find out whether you are telling him a long story or not. He is inquisitive, irrepressively curious and, above all, he has his own manner and angle of looking at things. He puts questions about all things and subjects and in all ways that seem queer to an adult view. His answers too to questions, his solutions of problems are very unorthodox, bizarre. But it is all the more the task of the elder not only to put up with all these vagaries, but also with great sympathy and patience to appreciate and understand what the child attempts to express. If you are irritated or angry and try to snub or brush him away, it would mean the end of all cordial relation between you and him. Or, again, if you try to hoodwink him, give a false answer to hide your ignorance, in that case too the child will not be deceived, he will find you out and lose all respect for you. It is far better to own your ignorance, saying you do not know than to pose as a knowing man; although that may affect to some extent his sense of hero-worship and he may not entertain any longer the unspoilt awe and esteem with which he was accustomed to look up to you, still you will not lose his affection and confidence. Infinite patience and a temper that is never frayed or ruffled are demanded of the teacher and the parent who wish to guide and control successfully and happily a child. With that you can mould in the end the most refractory child, without that you will fail even with a child of goodwill.

## GOD MADE HUMAN

Nicholas Berdyaev (whose book was reviewed in the last number of *The Advent*) is an ardent worker, as a Russian is naturally expected to be, in the cause of the spiritual rehabilitation of mankind. He is a Christian, a neo-Christian: some of his conclusions are old-world truths and bear repetition and insistence; others are of a more limited, conditional and even doubtful nature. His conception of the value of human person, the dignity and the high reality he gives to it, can never be too welcome in a world where the individual seems to have gone the way of vanished empires and kings and princes. But even more important and interesting is the view he

underlines that the true person is a spiritual being, that is to say, it is quite other than the empirical ego that man normally is—"not this that one worships" as the Upanishads too declare. Further, in his spiritual being man, the individual, is not simply a portion or a fraction; he is, on the contrary, an integer, a complete whole, a creative focus; the true individual is a microcosm yet holding in it and imaging the macrocosm. Only perhaps greater stress is laid upon the aspect of creativity or activism. An Eastern sage, a Vedantin, would look for the true spiritual reality behind the flux of forces: Prakriti or Energy is only the executive will of the Purusha, the Conscious Being. The personality in Nature is a formulation and emanation of the transcendent impersonality.

There is another aspect of personality as viewed by Berdyaev which involves a bias of the more orthodox Christian faith: the Christ is inseparable from the cross. So he says: "There is no such thing as personality if there is no capacity for suffering. Suffering is inherent in God too, if he is a personality, and not merely an abstract idea. God shares in the sufferings of men. He yearns for responsive love. There are divine as well as human passions and therefore divine or creative personality must always suffer to the end of time. A condition of anguish and distress is inherent in it." The view is logically enforced upon the Christian, it is said, if he is to accept incarnation, God becoming flesh. Flesh cannot but be weak. This very weakness, so human, is and must be specially characteristic of God also, if he is one with man and his lover and saviour.

Eastern spirituality does not view sorrow and suffering—evil—as an integral part of the Divine Consciousness. It is born out of the Divine, no doubt, as nothing can be outside the Divine, but it is a local and temporal formation; it is a disposition consequent upon certain conditions and with the absence or elimination of those conditions, this disposition too disappears. God and the divine consciousness can only be purity, light, immortality and delight. The compassion that a Buddha feels for the suffering humanity is not at all a feeling of suffering; pain or any such normal human reaction does not enter into its composition; it is the movement of a transcendent consciousness which is beyond and purified of the normal reactions, yet overarching them and entering into them as a soothing and illumining and vivifying presence. The healer knows and understands the pain and suffering of his patient but is not touched by them; he need not contract the illness of his patient in order to be in sympathy with him. The Divine—the Soul—can be in flesh and yet not smirched with its mire; the flesh is not essentially or irrevocably the ooze it is under certain given conditions. The divine physical body is composed of radiant matter and one can speak of it even as of the soul that weapons cannot pierce it nor can fire burn it.

## " SAVITRI " *

The divine consciousness descending into earthly life as Grace and taking a human form is a mystic, a supremely mysterious phenomenon. The personality that incarnates it belongs at the same time to two apparently incompatible and contrary worlds and possesses a dual character. Within, it harbours the Divine, is the Divine, fully conscious in its sovereign potency above the laws of a mortal life of ignorance; without, it embraces this world too, this play of inconscience and limitation. The two confront each other in the Incarnation with equal potency and in magic interaction.

The normal man, in his external being, is an abject surrender to Inferior Nature, to "the dual tables and the Karmic norm", baring as he does "a helpless heart to destiny's stroke":

> Obedient to the statutes fixed of old
> Admitting without appeal the nether gods

and because of the absolute rule of the Inconscient in him

> The animal browses in the sacred fence
> And the gold Hawk can cross the skies no more.

But that is the apparent man and he cannot continue to be so eternally. There does come a time when Nature fails him and he has to dive and arrive naked in the presence of his soul. The Soul and Nature, the Spirit and the flesh, Consciousness and Inconscience, God and the Enemy stand face to face: their antinomy has to be solved. That is the great Issue, the Riddle of the Sphinx, and upon that depends the destiny of man.

On the one hand, the soul possessed of the Divine, even so, the Divine himself become human, carries into the earthly life the divine light and happiness: for that is the inherent and inalienable character of divine being. Beyond and behind the human movement and destiny that occupy the frontal consciousness, there lies inviolate the divine dispensation. That was how the child Savitri grew and matured drawing upon the secret memory of her godhead and gathering into her all the cosmic aspirations, at the same time radiating by her very presence something of the heaven's own glory, the hope and comfort that can come only from the Divine Mother's bosom:

> Immortal rhythms swayed in her time-born steps;
> Her look, her smile awoke celestial sense
> Even in earth-stuff, and their intense delight
> Poured a supernal beauty on men's lives.

* Book 1 Canto 2.

That is the essential truth and reality, the original dispensation and that is the promise of a world to come. For it is the Light of the Dawn crowning the summits of earth-bound Nature.

But the Shadow had to cut across the Light; Love supernal has become human, and human tears are part of the play. That role too has to be accepted—accepted but redeemed. Against Love stands Death, against eternal union eternal separation, that is the bar sinister set upon humanity's fate. Love is the Supreme's sanction, his seal of assent, it is even the body of the truth. Love came to the high immaculate soul divine: Love moved her and now she has to pass through the calvary:

> One dealt with her who meets the burdened great.
> Assigner of the ordeal and the path
> Who chooses in this holocaust of the soul
> Death, fall and sorrow as the spirit's goads...

The Divine Grace stands at the very origin of things. If Matter is tainted with an original inconscience, and existence seems to be bounded with non-existence, even there on the ultimate frontier of reality, as it were, is born the Light that saves, the Love that conquers:

> On the bare peak where Self is alone with Nought
> And life has no sense and love no place to stand,
> She must plead her case upon extinction's verge.

The Grace grips the Evil at its very source. It may seem even that she calls out the Evil from its lair, so that it may not remain in hiding but come under her light and power of redemption. The first wrong step is at once a call for succour. Thus the Light strikes the source itself from where issues Darkness. And the embodied Descent means the cancellation of the reign of Ignorance. Grace (Savitri) saves Truth (Satyavan). Yet it means a process, a span for the play of forces. For a sudden descent of the fullness of the Light is likely to defeat its own object: an onrush of the supreme consciousness without let or hindrance might mean, must surely mean a catastrophe. Here below circumscribed in material life

> Too high the fire spiritual dare not blaze.
> If once it met the intense original Flame,
> An answering touch might shatter all measures made
> And earth sink down with the weight of the Infinite.

That is the meaning of the battle, of the growing godhead struggling with the Enemy, combating and conquering him slowly, in the beginning,

gradually and surely and inevitably in his own field and on his own terms, in the end. That also is the great gift and function of Evil:

> He made her heart kin to the striving human heart.

The Shadow has humanised the Divine. The Divine is humanised, yet undiminished in its divinity. The divine consciousness is lost nowhere, even in the midst of the utter inconscience; the Incarnation too, even while becoming a thing of flesh and mortality, maintains its inviolable and immortal radiant substance. Love pities the world but does not itself become pitiful; it can fruitfully lodge in a heart deep and vast and strong, even as Savitri's :

> a sea of white sincerity,
> Passionate in flow, had not one turbid wave

or,

> A continent of self-diffusing peace,
> An ocean of untrembling virgin fire.

For only thus what is human, perhaps too human, can be turned into, shall inevitably develop into, what is supremely divine.

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The *Power of Agni* will keep the *aspiration* flaming in the physical being. Then can be founded and established in a *vital opened to Radha's influence* the true *supramentalised friendship* with the Divine.

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Approach the Divine with *loving gratitude* and you will meet the *Divine's Love*.

# THE DIVINE WORK*

ONE question remains for the seeker upon the way of works, when his quest is or seems to have come to its natural end,—whether any work or what work is left for the soul after liberation and to what purpose? Equality has been seated in the nature or governs the whole nature; there has been achieved a radical deliverance from the ego-idea, from the pervading ego-sense, from all feelings and impulsions of the ego and its self-will and desires. The entire self-consecration has been made not only in thought and heart but in all the complexities of the being. A complete purity or transcendence of the three gunas has been harmoniously established. The soul has seen the Master of its works and lives in His presence or is consciously contained in His being or is unified with Him or feels Him in the heart or above and obeys His dictates. It has known its true being and cast away the veil of the Ignorance. What work then remains for the worker in man and with what motive, to what end, in what spirit will it be done?

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There is one answer with which we are very familiar in India; no work at all remains, for the rest is quiescence. When the soul can live in the eternal presence of the Supreme or when it is unified with the Absolute, the object of our existence in the world, if it can be said to have an object, at once ceases. Man, released from the curse of self-division and the curse of Ignorance, is released too from that other affliction, the curse of works. All action would then be a derogation from the supreme state and a return into the Ignorance. This attitude towards life is supported by an idea founded on the error of the vital nature to which action is dictated only by one or all of three inferior motives, necessity, restless instinct and impulse or desire. The instinct or impulse quiescent, desire extinguished, what place is there for works? Some mechanical necessity might remain but no other, and even that would cease for ever with the fall of the body. But after all, even so, while life remains, action is unavoidable. Mere thinking or, in the absence of thought, mere living is itself an act and a cause of many effects. All existence in the world is work, force, potency, and has a dynamic effect in the whole by its mere presence, even the inertia of the clod, even the silence of the immobile Buddha on the verge of Nirvana. There is the question only of the manner of the action, the instruments

*The Synthesis of Yoga, Chapter XII. (Revised Version.)

that are used or that act of themselves, and the spirit and knowledge of the worker. For in reality, no man works, but Nature works through him for the self-expression of a Power within that proceeds from the Infinite. To know that and live in the presence and in the being of the Master of Nature, free from desire and the illusion of personal impulsion, is the one thing needful. That and not the bodily cessation of action is the true release; for the bondage of works at once ceases. A man might sit still and motionless for ever and yet be as much bound to the Ignorance as the animal or the insect. But if he can make this greater consciousness dynamic within him, then all the work of all the worlds could pass through him and yet he would remain at rest, absolute in calm and peace, free from all bondage. Action in the world is given us first as a means for our self-development and self-fulfilment; but even if we reached a last possible divine self-completeness, it would still remain as a means for the fulfilment of the divine intention in the world and of the larger universal self of which each being is a portion—a portion that has come down with it from the Transcendence.

In a certain sense, when his Yoga has reached a certain culmination, works cease for a man; for he has no further personal necessity of works, no sense of works being done by him; but there is no need to flee from action or to take refuge in a blissful inertia. For now he acts as the Divine Existence acts without any binding necessity and without any compelling ignorance. Even in doing works he does not work at all; he undertakes no personal initiative. It is the Divine Shakti that works in him through his nature; his action develops through the spontaneity of a supreme Force by which his instruments are possessed, of which he is a part, with whose will his will is identical and his power is her power. The spirit within him contains, supports and watches this action; it presides over it in knowledge but is not glued or clamped to the work by attachment or need, is not bound by desire of its fruit, is not enslaved to any movement or impulse.

It is a common error to suppose that action is impossible or at least meaningless without desire. If desire ceases, we are told, action also must cease. But this, like other too simply comprehensive generalisations, is more attractive to the cutting and defining mind than true. The major part of the work done in the universe is accomplished without any interference of desire; it proceeds by the calm necessity and spontaneous law of Nature. Even man constantly does work of various kinds by a spontaneous impulse, intuition, instinct or acts in obedience to a natural necessity and law of forces without either mental planning or the urge of a conscious vital volition or emotional desire. Often enough his act is contrary to his intention or his desire; it proceeds out of him in subjection to a need or compulsion, in submission to an impulse, an obedience to a force in him that pushes for self-expression or in conscious pursuance of a higher principle. Desire

is an additional lure to which Nature has given a great part in the life of animated beings in order to produce a certain kind of rajasic action necessary for her intermediate ends; but it is not her sole or even her chief engine. It has its great use while it endures: it helps us to rise out of inertia, it contradicts many tamasic forces which would otherwise inhibit action. But the seeker who has advanced far on the way of works has passed beyond this intermediate stage in which desire is a helpful engine. Its push is no longer indispensable for his action, but is rather a terrible hindrance and source of stumbling, inefficiency and failure. Others are obliged to obey a personal choice or motive, but he has to learn to act with an impersonal or a universal mind or as a part or an instrument of an infinite Person. A calm indifference, a joyful impartiality or a blissful response to a divine Force, whatever its dictate, is the condition of his doing any effective work or undertaking any worth-while action. Not desire, not attachment must drive him, but a Will that stirs in a divine peace, a Knowledge that moves from the transcendent Light, a glad Impulse that is a force from the supreme Ananda.

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In an advanced stage of the Yoga it is indifferent to the seeker, in the sense of any personal preference, what action he shall do or not do; even whether he shall act or not is not decided by his personal choice or pleasure. Always he is moved to do whatever is in consonance with the Truth or whatever the Divine demands through his nature. A false conclusion is sometimes drawn from this that the spiritual man, accepting the position in which Fate or God or his past Karma has placed him, content to work in the field and cadre of the family, clan, caste, nation, occupation which are his by birth and circumstance, will not and even perhaps ought not to make any movement to exceed them or to pursue any great mundane end. Since he has really no work to do, since he has only to use works, no matter what works, as long as he is in the body in order to arrive at liberation or, having arrived, only to obey the supreme Will and do whatever it dictates, the actual field given him is sufficient for the purpose. Once free, he has only to continue working in the sphere assigned to him by Fate and circumstances till the great hour arrives when he can at last disappear into the Infinite. To insist on any particular end or to work for some great mundane object is to fall into the illusion of works; it is to entertain the error that terrestrial life has an intelligible intention and contains objects worthy of pursuit. The great theory of Illusion, which is a practical denial of the Divine in the world, even when in idea it acknowledges the Presence, is once more before us. But the Divine is here in the world,—not only in

status but in dynamis, not only as a spiritual self and presence but as power, force, energy,—and therefore a divine work in the world is possible.

There is no narrow principle, no field of cabined action that can be imposed on the Karmayogin as his rule or his province. This much is true that every kind of works, whether small to man's imagination or great, petty in scope or wide, can be equally used in the progress towards liberation or for self-discipline. This much is also true that after liberation a man may dwell in any sphere of life and in any kind of action and fulfil there his existence in the Divine. According as he is moved by the Spirit, he may remain in the sphere assigned to him by birth and circumstances or break that framework and go forth to an untrammelled action which shall be the fitting body of his greatened consciousness and higher knowledge. To the outward eyes of men the inner liberation may make no apparent difference in his outward acts; or, on the contrary, the freedom and infinity within may translate itself into an outward dynamic working so large and new that all regards are drawn by this novel force. If such be the intention of the Supreme within him, the liberated soul may be content with a subtle and limited action within the old human surroundings which will in no way seek to change their outward appearance. But it may too be called to a work which will not only alter the forms and sphere of its own external life but, leaving nothing around it unchanged or unaffected, create a new world or a new order.

* * *

A prevalent idea would persuade us that the sole aim of liberation is to secure for the individual soul freedom from physical rebirth in the unstable life of the universe. If this freedom is once assured, there is no farther work for it in life here or elsewhere or only that which the continued existence of the body demands or the unfulfilled effects of past lives necessitate. This little, rapidly exhausted or consumed by the fire of Yoga, will cease with the departure of the released soul from the body. The aim of escape from rebirth, now long fixed in the Indian mentality as the highest object of the soul, has replaced the enjoyment of a heaven beyond fixed in the mentality of the devout by other religions as their divine lure. Indian religion also upheld that earlier and lower call when the gross external interpretation of the Vedic hymns was the dominant creed. Undoubtedly a release from the limitations of the mind and body into an eternal peace, rest, silence of the Spirit, makes a higher appeal than the offer of a heaven of mental joys or eternised physical pleasures, but it is after all a lure; its insistence on the mind's world-weariness, the life-being's shrinking from the adventure of birth, strikes a chord of weakness and cannot be the supreme motive. The

desire of personal salvation, however high its form, is an outcome of ego: it rests on the idea of our own individuality and of its desire or good, its longing for a release from suffering or its cry for the extinction of the trouble of becoming and makes that the supreme aim of our existence. To rise beyond the desire of personal salvation is necessary for the complete rejection of this basis of ego. If we seek the Divine, it should be for the sake of the Divine and for nothing else, because that is the supreme call of our being, the deepest truth of the spirit; the pursuit of liberation, of the soul's freedom, of the realisation of our true and highest self, of union with the Divine, is justified because it is the highest law of our nature, because it is the attraction of that which is lower in us to that which is highest, because it is the Divine Will in us. That is its sufficient justification and its one truest reason; all other motives are excrescences, minor or incidental truths or useful lures which the soul must abandon, the moment their utility has passed and the state of oneness with the Supreme and with all beings has become our normal consciousness and the bliss of that state our spiritual atmosphere.

Often, we see this desire of personal salvation overcome by another attraction which also belongs to the higher turn of our nature and which indicates the essential character of the action the liberated soul must pursue. It is that which is implied in the great legend of the Amitabha Buddha who turned away when his spirit was on the threshold of Nirvana and took the vow never to cross it while a single being remained in the sorrow and the Ignorance. It is that which underlies the sublime verse of the Bhagavata Purana, "I desire not the supreme state with all its eight siddhis nor the cessation of rebirth; may I assume the sorrow of all creatures who suffer and enter into them so that they may be made free from grief." It is that which inspires a remarkable passage in a letter of Swami Vivekananda, "I have lost all wish for my salvation;" wrote the great Vedantin, "may I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum-total of all souls,—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all, races, of all species is the special object of my worship. He who is the high and low, the saint and the sinner, the god and the worm, Him worship, the visible, the knowable, the real, the omnipresent; break all other idols. In whom there is neither past life nor future birth, nor death nor going nor coming, in whom we always have been and always will be one, Him worship; break all other idols."

The last two sentences contain indeed the whole gist of the matter. The true salvation or the true freedom from the chain of rebirth is not the rejection of terrestrial life or the individual's escape by a spiritual self-annihilation, even as the true renunciation is not the mere physical abandonment

of family and society; it is the inner identification with the Divine in whom there is no limitation of past life and future birth but instead the eternal existence of the unborn Soul. He who is free inwardly, even doing actions, does nothing at all, says the Gita; for it is Nature that works in him under the control of the Lord of Nature. Equally, even if he assumes a hundred times the body, he is free from any chain of birth or mechanical wheel of existence since he lives in the unborn and undying spirit and not in the life of the body. Therefore attachment to the escape from rebirth is one of the idols which, whoever keeps, the sadhaka of the integral Yoga must break and cast away from him. For, his Yoga is not limited to the realisation of the Transcendent beyond all world by the individual soul; it embraces also the realisation of the Universal, "the sum-total of all souls", and cannot therefore be confined to the movement of a personal salvation and escape. Even in his transcendence of cosmic limitations he is still one with all in God; a divine work remains for him in the universe.

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That work cannot be fixed by any mind-made rule or human standard; for his consciousness has moved away from human law and limits and passed into the divine liberty, away from government by the external and transient into the self-rule of the inner and eternal, away from the binding forms of the finite into the free self-determination of the Infinite. "Howsoever he lives and acts", says the Gita, "he lives and acts in Me." The rules which the intellect of men lays down cannot apply to the liberated soul,—by the external criteria and tests which their mental associations and prejudgments prescribe, such a one cannot be judged; he is outside the narrow jurisdiction of these fallible tribunals. It is immaterial whether he wears the garb of the ascetic or lives the full life of the householder; whether he spends his days in what men call holy works or in the many-sided activities of the world; whether he devotes himself to the direct leading of men to the light like Buddha, Christ or Shankara or governs kingdoms like Janaka or stands before men like Sri Krishna as a politician or a leader of armies; what he eats or drinks; what are his habits or his pursuits; whether he fails or succeeds; whether his work be one of construction or of destruction; whether he supports or restores an old order or labours to replace it by a new; whether his associates are those whom men delight to honour or those whom it outcastes and reprobates; whether his life and deeds are approved by his contemporaries or he is condemned as a misleader of men and a fomenter of religious, moral or social heresies. He is not governed by the judgments of men or the laws laid down by the ignorant; he obeys an inner voice and is moved by an unseen Power. His

real life is within and this is its description that he lives, moves and acts in God, in the Divine, in the Infinite.

But if his action is governed by no external rule, one rule it will observe that is not external; it will be dictated by no personal desire or aim, but will be a part of a conscious and eventually a well-ordered because self-ordered divine working in the world. The Gita declares that the action of the liberated man must be directed not by desire, but towards the keeping together of the world, its government, guidance, impulsion, maintenance in the path appointed to it. This injunction has been interpreted in the sense that the world being an illusion in which most men must be kept, since they are unfit for liberation, he must so act outwardly as to cherish in them an attachment to their customary works laid down for them by the social law. If so, it would be a poor and petty rule and every noble heart would reject it to follow rather the divine vow of Amitabha Buddha, the sublime prayer of the Bhagavata, the passionate aspiration of Vivekananda. But if we accept rather the view that the world is a divinely guided movement of Nature emerging in man towards God and that this is the work in which the Lord of the Gita declares that he is ever occupied although he himself has nothing ungained that he has yet to win, then a deep and true sense will appear for this great injunction. To participate in that divine work, to live for God in the world will be the rule of the Karmayogin; to live for God in the world and therefore so to act that the Divine may more and more manifest himself and the world go forward by whatever way of its obscure pilgrimage and move nearer to the divine ideal.

How he shall do this, in what particular way, can be decided by no general rule. It must develop or define itself from within; the decision lies between God and our self, the Supreme Self and the individual self that is the instrument of the work; even before liberation, it is from the inner self, as soon as we become conscious of it, that there rises the sanction, the spiritually determined choice. It is altogether from within that must come the knowledge of the work that has to be done. There is no particular work, no law or form or outwardly fixed or invariable way of works that can be said to be that of the liberated being. The phrase, used in the Gita to express this work that has to be done, has indeed been interpreted in the sense that we must do our duty without regard to the fruit. But this is a conception born of European culture which is ethical rather than spiritual and external rather than inwardly profound in its concepts. No such general thing as duty exists; we have only duties, often in conflict with each other, and these are determined by our environment, our social relations, our external status in life. They are of great value in training the immature moral nature and setting up a standard which discourages the action of selfish desire. It has already been said that so long as the seeker has no

the inner light, he must govern himself by the best light he has, and duty, a principle, a cause are among the standards he may temporarily erect and observe. But for all that, duties are external things, not stuff of the soul and cannot be the ultimate standard of action in this path. It is the duty of the soldier to fight when called upon, even to fire upon his own kith and and kin; but such a standard or any akin to it cannot be imposed on the liberated man. On the other hand, to love or have compassion, to obey the highest truth of our being, to follow the command of the Divine are not duties; these things are a law of the nature as it rises towards the Divine, an outflowing of action from a soul state, a high reality of the spirit. The action of the liberated doer of works must be even such an outflowing from the soul; it must come to him or out of him as a natural result of his spiritual union with the Divine and not be formed by an edifying construction of the mental thought and will, the practical reason or the social sense. In the ordinary life a personal, social or traditional constructed rule, standard or ideal is the guide; once the spiritual journey has begun, this must be replaced by an inner and outer rule or way of living necessary for our self-discipline, liberation and perfection, a way of living proper to the path we follow or enjoined by the spiritual guide and master, the Guru, or else dictated by a Guide within us. But in the last state of the soul's infinity and freedom all outward standards are replaced or laid aside and there is left only a spontaneous and integral obedience to the Divine with whom we are in union and an action spontaneously fulfilling the integral spiritual truth of our being and nature.

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It is this deeper sense in which we must accept the dictum of the Gita that action determined and governed by the nature must be our law of works. It is not, certainly, the superficial temperament or the character or habitual impulses that are meant, but in the literal sense of the Sanskrit word our "own-being", our essential nature, the divine stuff of our souls. Whatever springs from this root or flows from these sources is profound, essential, right; the rest—opinions, impulses, habits, desires—may be merely surface formations or casual vagaries of the being or impositions from outside. They shift and change, but this remains constant. It is not the executive forms taken by Nature in us that are ourselves or the abidingly constant and expressive shape of ourselves, it is the spiritual being in us and the soul-becoming of it that persists through time in the universe.

We cannot, however, easily distinguish this true inner law of our being; it is kept screened from us so long as the heart and intellect remain unpurified

from egoism: till then we follow superficial and impermanent ideas, impulses, desires, suggestions and impositions of all kinds from our environment or work out formations of our temporary mental, vital, physical personality—that passing experimental and structural self which has been made for us by an interaction between our being and the pressure of a lower cosmic Nature. In proportion as we are purified, the true being within declares itself more clearly; our will is less entangled in suggestions from outside or shut up in our own superficial mental constructions. Egoism renounced, the nature purified, action will come from the soul's dictates, from the depths or the heights of the spirit, or it will be openly governed by the Lord who was all the time seated secretly within our hearts. The supreme and final word of the Gita for the Yogin is that he should leave all conventional formulas of belief and action, all fixed and external rules of conduct, all constructions of the outward surface Nature, *dharmas*, and take refuge in the Divine alone. Free from desire and attachment, one with all beings, living in the infinite Truth and Purity and acting out of the profoundest deeps of his inner consciousness, governed by his immortal, divine and highest Self, all his works will be directed by the Power within through that essential spirit and nature in us which, knowing, warring, working, loving, serving, is always divine, towards the fulfilment of God in the world, an expression of the Eternal in Time.

A divine action arising spontaneously, freely, infallibly from the light and force of our spiritual self in union with the Divine is the last state of this integral Yoga of Works. The truest reason why we must seek liberation is not to be delivered, individually, from the sorrow of the world, though that deliverance too will be given to us, but that we may be one with the Divine, the Supreme, the Eternal. The truest reason why we must seek perfection, a supreme status, purity, knowledge, strength, love, capacity, is not that personally we may enjoy the divine Nature or be even as the gods, though that enjoyment too will be ours, but because this liberation and perfection are the divine Will in us, the highest truth of our self in Nature, the always intended goal of a progressive manifestation in the universe. The divine Nature, free and perfect and blissful, must be manifested in the individual in order that it may manifest in the world. Even in the Ignorance the individual lives really in the universal and for the universal Purpose, for in the very act of pursuing the purposes and desires of his ego, he is forced by Nature to contribute by his egoistic action to her work and purpose in the worlds; but it is without conscious intention, imperfectly done, and his contribution is to her half-evolved and half-conscient, her imperfect and crude movement. To escape from ego and be united with the Divine is at once the liberation and the consummation of his individuality; so liberated, purified, perfected, the individual—the divine

soul—lives consciously and entirely, as was from the first intended, in and for the cosmic and transcendent Divine and for His Will in the universe.

In the Way of Knowledge we may arrive at a point where we can leap out of personality and universe, escape from all thought and will and works and all way of Nature and, absorbed and taken up into Eternity, plunge into the Transcendence; that, though not obligatory on the God-knower, may be the soul's decision, the term pursued by the self within us. In the Way of Devotion we may reach through an intensity of adoration and joy union with the supreme All-Beloved and remain eternally in the ecstasy of his presence, absorbed in him alone, intimately in one world of bliss with him; that then may be our being's impulsion, its spiritual choice. But in the Way of Works another prospect opens; for travelling on that path, we can enter into liberation and perfection by becoming of one law and power of nature with the Eternal; we are identified with Him in our will and dynamic self as much as in our spiritual status; a divine way of works is the natural outcome of this union; a divine living in a spiritual freedom the body of its self-expression. In the Integral Yoga these three lines of approach give up their exclusions, meet and coalesce or spring out of each other; liberated from the mind's veil over the self, we live in the Transcendence, enter by the adoration of the heart into the oneness of a supreme love and bliss and, all our forces of being uplifted into the one Force, our will and works surrendered into the one Will and Power, assume the dynamic perfection of the divine Nature.

SRI AUROBINDO

# INTEGRAL YOGA AND PHYSICAL IMMORTALITY

## (Reply to a letter)

THE question is raised if the achievement of physical immortality comes within the purview of the Integral Yoga. It may be supposed that the qualifying word employed to distinguish the Yoga should suffice to point to the direction of the answer. But let us first make certain what is meant by physical immortality. Does it mean, as is remarked here, "a perfectly healthy state of the body and nothing else"? If it were to signify only that, then there are a hundred means within the easy reach of many who have no particular partiality for Yoga and can yet seek this "perfect health" whatever it may mean. Elixirs abound in plenty; there are herbs, there are tonics whose health-giving properties are considerable and are so believed and known from times immemorial. There is thus no need to have recourse to Yoga, at any rate to a spiritual Yoga, to achieve this end; perhaps, Hatha Yoga is the last word so far for building up a strong physique that can store up and reinforce vitality in abundance.

It is obvious that that is not the import of 'Immortality' in the context. It means much more than sound health or a longer span of life. When the text of the Upanishad to which reference is made in the letter, says, "For him there is no disease, no old age, no death", it certainly means what it says and it is wrong to take it as hyperbole or rhetorical. The ancients had the intuition that once the Yogin is freed from the meshes of Ignorance and Falsehood and is reborn into the Truth and Knowldege, his being pulsates with the vibrations of the higher consciousness and his body could become one with the Flame of Yoga and resist the forces of decay, decrepitude and death.

It may be asked if it is implied that a Yoga Siddha lives in the same body for ever. That is not what immortality means even when it is applied to the material body. It means a conquest of, not mere control, over the forces that bring about mortality through the agency of disease and age that are the emissaries of death. Conquest of mortality cannot and does not mean a helpless encasement of the soul for centuries in the same physical body scarcely distinguishable from the Egyptian mummy. The possibility apart, what use can there be for a soul, a perfected soul, to cling to the same vesture for eternity?

Is it then the immortality of the soul, the self in the embodied being, that is aimed at? That would be meaningless. For the soul, *jiva*, in the sense of Spirit in the embodied being is immortal, even as the Divine, the Atman of All Existence, is. It is deathless; it dies not when the body

dies. If then immortality refers neither to the body physical nor to the spiritual being that is the soul which is immortal by right, what does it mean, to what does it apply?

The question of immortality concerns the whole man, not merely his soul, the spiritual being, that is embodied in him though that is the most important, because central, part in the totality of his being; nor does it apply only to the material body which is gross and openly exposed to the attacks of forces that bring about disease and death. It applies also to those intermediate and connecting links of life and mind, in between Spirit and Matter, represented in man by the embodied spirit and the material body. Here comes in the Integral Yoga. Its attempt is directed towards the integration of the whole being of man in all its component parts which are the warring elements in the system of the human field. This integration is necessary because that is the right and only cure for the ills of disintegration caused by the disharmony working havoc in the various members of what must be a harmonic unit, a well-organised human system. From this it would follow that mortality is the ultimate result of disharmony in the different elements that constitute the human system and that it is not an inalienable property of matter, but is the result wrought by universal forces which operate on the physical sheath; but the gross body after all is just one part, though basic part taking the place of a pedestal in the world of Matter, on which the whole human structure is built. It is necessary, then, to note that before the forces of illness that are the messengers of mortality become tangible experience of the body, they were already active using mostly the life-forces and to some extent the thought-forces as well to yield the result of the disharmonising influences to be borne by the physical sheath of the human soul.

How to combat these forces is the question. The Integral Yoga proceeds on the basis that there is a higher realm of Truth, Light, Power, Consciousness, above this mortal plane, while the latter is riddled with falsehood, suffused with darkness, subject to a many-sided incapacity and ignorance. Something of that higher region can, through Yoga, be invoked to come down and set right the disorder and found here in the human being the rule of the Higher Consciousness and the Supreme Power. This is the sole and ultimate remedy for all human ills. A fairly good health of body, a large capacity of life, a wide mind, an awakened soul are all certainly favourable conditions for the Yoga Force to act on the human being. But ideal conditions to start the Sadhana are usually rare. But once it is started, whichever part is more developed than the rest receives the benefit more as a matter of course. But a good start, the true beginning, is possible only when the soul, the spiritual something that is at the core, which is central and radical in the human being, is awakened to the call of the higher life

and soars high for the Light and Power of the Divine Being above the mortal mind and body and life.

The awakening of the soul is of course the cumulative effect of previous efforts in this life or other lives. But usually it comes at the touch of the Supreme Guide, by the Divine Grace directly or through the human representative of the Divine. Spiritual in essence, one in spirit with the Divine deep within itself, the soul can rise to the higher altitudes and come in direct contact with the Divine Splendour above; it can also receive the Divine in itself, in the heart, which is not the same as the emotional mind, but the secret chamber within for the Divine communion. The soul that can rise to the higher consciousness, to the plane of the Immortal Light, rises also above the mortal ignorance and falsehood, and can live independent of the mental coverings of all kinds that are charged with sensational impressions and thinkings, independent of the vital sheaths that are pierced through with desires and passions and other forces of darkness, independent also of the outermost sheath that is the gross body of the elements. The soul thus shakes off these coils of mortality that dominate the life of man, and lives in the Divine, in the higher consciousness, while the body may still continue to be subject to the forces of disorder that engulf the life and mind and penetrate into the very cells of the physical mechanism. The soul indeed wins immortality for itself, of which it is truly said in the Scripture to which reference is made in the letter, 'one who is fit for embodiment in the higher worlds of His creations'.

But the aim of the Integral Yoga is not this immortality, though this great realisation constitutes a firm basis for its fruition. The immortality of the soul has to extend and apply itself to the members—mind, life, body —that have formed into and shaped the embodiment of the spirit here on earth. Once this embodied spirit, the soul, emerges from the darkness and mortality below into the Light and Immortality above, it lives in conscious union with the Divine, and in the higher consciousness realises the unity of existence, the Divine behind all that exists, lives and thinks. And in this realisation, the Power and Light that flow from the Higher Consciousness come down to the mind, widening and universalising it so that it may reflect the Truth, the Immortal Spirit; to the life-sheath that links the mind to the body, enlarging and strengthening it so that it may cast off the dross of narrow and petty clingings to mortal existence; to the material body, making it strong and supple and in a way subtly luminous so that it may throw out the elemental forces of inertia and darkness.

The aim, then, of the Yoga is achieved when the soul, that is in constant contact with the Divine, turns with the vision, the Grace of the Divine High above, to the mortal instrument of thinking life in the body, calling upon the powers of the Immortal, the True Light, the True Knowledge, to take

charge of the whole system so that all the parts may be put in right working order, harmony displacing disharmony, a natural effortless health unseating the forces of illness, an integrated finished product becoming a true and fit vessel and instrument and centre for God's immortal life on Earth.

This is, in terms of the Integral Yoga, what is meant by Immortality in the physical sense also. It is an all-round immortality that is meant by the term. Integral Immortality is the aim of Integral Yoga. This Immortality is not accomplished until all the forces that are the causes of disintegration and death, are not merely combated and controlled, but conquered. For Death comes not only through illness caused by the disorderly behaviour of vital desires and bodily life, not only through aging which is the work of time, but also through the workings of the hidden forces that bring about what we call accidents. To combat and conquer the last demands the free unobstructed workings of the Higher Consciousness from the Plane of the Immortal. The other immediate causes of death may be combated and only controlled and therefore their effects postponed by a judicious handling of life, by mechanical devices and breath-control as are done in Hatha Yoga, or by some other means, including the aid of occult powers to some extent. The Integral Yoga resorts to the use of occult powers in its process to ward off many an evil including physical illnesses of many kinds that beset the path. But that is not the same as the working of the powers of Immortality which is possible only when the Higher Consciousness finds easy access to the lower plane. But Yoga cannot and does not wait mutely, because its force is dynamic, for the soul's hour of Divine realisation in order to proceed logically from above, and bring down the Higher Light and Knowledge to the mind, strength and dynamis to the life, roundedness and lightness and harmony of all the parts to the physique. Therefore without set rules which can apply on all occasions to all Sadhakas, the Yoga proceeds with its work and deals with each as the occasion demands.

It must be noted that when immortality becomes an accomplished fact, it means that the soul with all the elements of its embodiment lives for ever in the Divine, in the Truth-consciousness, in the Immortal Light, one with the Divine Will and Knowledge. The Integral Yogin is free to live and move, and have or leave the particular embodiment at will, but not bound or compelled to leave it by the forces that are now conquered but which were the causes of mortality.

This is just a sketch—more cannot be attempted here—of the broad lines of Yoga in its application to the question of immortality. The significance of 'physical immortality' then, is this that it is not a separate achievement of physical perfection, *siddhi*, but forms part of the integral immortality to which the Yoga applies itself. The aim is not to keep the body

alive and intact for geological ages, but to make it fit to express the Divine intention in this creation. The material body therefore has to receive and assimilate the Divine substance of immortality, *Amrita*, from above and so change itself that it can hold the supreme life-force and become a living point of intimate contact for the Divine in his terrestrial manifestation.

This Yoga is of course called Integral Yoga, and there are other terms used to indicate the character, aim or means of the Yoga. But it is the substance that matters and there is not much in names. Yet there is very much in one name, and as an humble worshipper at the shrine of this Yoga, I prefer to call it the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, for his is the perception of this truth, his is the discovery of the way to realise it, his is the kindly light that leads. The road may be long, but the longest distance starts with a single step. The faithful pilgrim who is steadfast and treads the path knows no failure, for even failures are bricks in the edifice of success. Every step taken forward is a gain. Every one may not meet with a fuller measure of success; still the ground covered is a precious acquisition. Never indeed does one come to grief who does the good, and that is auspicious.

'*Na hi kalyanakrit kashcit durgatim tata gacchati.*'

T. V. Kapali Sastry

## MEDITATION : ITS PLACE IN SPIRITUAL LIFE

IT is not unoften that we are struck by flashes of profound wisdom shooting forth from the most unsophisticated minds. Perhaps it is for their very simplicity and directness that they are set as focal points, at the moment, for Truth-radiations.

An aged gentleman ripe with experience, a success in the world, once asked, perhaps scoffingly, a young novice in the spiritual path why he resorted to meditations so often and what it was. The youngster, almost an unlettered one, looked surprised and said, "Why, we meditate because it is *natural* for one to be quiet and meditate—say, like breathing."

*Natural*, that sums up in a word all that could be said of meditation. What is meditation? How is it natural? What is its place in the spiritual life?

Broadly speaking, meditation can be described as a poise of the being in which there is a general relaxation and the mind, withdrawn from its running course of activity, is left alone in the Quiet that stands like an immobile rock at the back of all its waves, ripples and even throbbings. The Quiet is there all the while, it is really more natural than the movement

in which we appear to be helplessly involved. This relaxation of oneself, particularly of the mind, this felt poise in the Quiet is obviously what the youth had in his mind when he described meditation as natural.

Meditation is not the same as concentration though both are concerned with the inner consciousness of which Mind is the spear-head. In concentration, one withdraws his mental activity from its customary preoccupations and directs it with a strong will on any one particular object for a length of time. The object concentrated upon may be a concrete one in the mundane existence or an idea or image. The aim of this one-pointed effort is to progressively apprehend the object and identify oneself completely with its nature. If the object concentrated upon is an intellectual problem—say, in scientific research—in the very act of concentration, one's consciousness gets identified with the nature of the object, seizes on the truth that yields to it and conveys intimations of the same to the surface. The process is the same whatever the nature of the object or the aim of the concentration be. If one concentrates upon the chosen Deity, Ishta-Devata, for instance, the consciousness gradually gets centred round that object and slowly begins to absorb something of the nature of the Devata and in the end gets completely identified with it.

Thus concentration is a means, a sharp weapon to achieve a particular end. It is used in spiritual life, among other things, for centering the activities of the normal mind in its meandering course; but it is not indispensable. And even when the mind has recourse to it, whatever the benefits that accrue—for certainly the mind gets subtilised and sharpened —they do not usually go far deeper into the layers of the mind.

Our consciousness has a vast gamut and apart from the gross and subtle layers of the thinking and reasoning mind there are others dominated by emotions, passions, desires and instinctively active or inactive impressions in the lower depths of the being. This entire consciousness has to be changed if one is to build up a successful inner life. Whatever the path chosen, the fundamental fact remains that our present human consciousness has got to be re-orientated, its nature subtilised and its centre of movement shifted to an inner and higher level. For only thus can it partake and absorb more and more of the higher vibrations until it ultimately assimilates or is assimilated into the deeper, purer strands of the ever-wakeful Spirit. It is only when this is established that any edifice could be erected. Naturally the question arises: how is our normal consciousness to be changed into the other kind—into a spiritual consciousness? Obviously, the key is in our consciousness itself. For at its core, our consciousness is truly spiritual, substantially pure and luminous and divine in essence. This purity of its nature gets gradually obscured with each exterior layer of itself until on the surface we are aware of just a commingled and murky field of desires

and passions, instincts and impulses with a veneer of the reasoning mind.

As we said earlier, it is indispensable to disturb the present set-up and shift the stress of the consciousness for any true spiritual life to be possible. Various are the methods tried for the purpose from times of yore. There are teachings which emphasise that work, Karma, done as a worship to the Lord in a disinterested spirit brings about the necessary change. There are others which point out that a devotional and complete abandoning of oneself to God does the needful. Again there is the common belief that study of the scriptures gives us the Knowledge, and the change follows as a matter of course if there is the faith and also the will to execute. Theoretically all these are quite sound; for, disinterested work, if done in the proper spirit, has an indirect or direct chastening influence on the being and nature of the doer; devotional surrender of oneself in utter love to the Divine Beloved may efface the human ego and prepare the chalice of one's heart for the pouring of His Love; study and reflection on the nature of the Spirit, on the relation of the Atman with the rest of the universe, can and do refine and heighten the mental level of the seeker, open to vaster vistas and give an intellectual comprehension of the true relation between the macrocosm and the microcosm. All these are possible and are facts of spiritual experience. But none of these is sufficient. The consciousness may not be touched in its core and the spiritual change is confined to the elements that have opened to the Higher Influence.

To change the habitual nature of the mind is to invite the inner, deeper or entire consciousness to come to the fore, and this cannot be achieved by human endeavour alone. But the thing is indispensable. Our consciousness is pure and fine in its deeper strata and at the core spiritual. If only one would calm the mental activity, withdraw the mind from its aimless movements, even though at intervals, but frequently, one can become aware of the frothy movements on the surface; one becomes aware at the back of the mind of something vacant, at first, some Quiet Blank as it were, on which thoughts were running about like pictures on a cinematographic screen. It is a simple truth, so often overlooked, that the mind is not made up of thoughts. Thoughts come and go but some background is there all the while which they pass by. It is something really immobile and substantial. It is there all along, only the mind in its ignorant groping does not turn to it; we have only to let our mental activity drop in order to become aware of it. This is a first glimpse one gets at the initial steps to the gates of the inner consciousness. Deeper, one begins to *hear* the Silence, to feel the Peace that constitutes the very stuff of the being, why, of the very universe around us. Or, one withdraws his consciousness from other activities and takes a plunge into the heart, the *hrid-guha*, as it is expressively

termed. As the consciousness withdraws into itself, he awakens to a strange world. There is no activity, no hectic movement; in fact the very breathing jars in the silent chambers of the soul. He enters the inner apartment, and the Higher Power, to which each seeker has opened himself through his human Guru or the World-Teacher, Jagadguru Himself, helps him, pulls him inside and begins to act more powerfully than it ever could if one had remained at the outer doors alone. Thus meditation, which is essentially a relaxation of one's mind regaining a truly natural poise of itself and rest in the consciousness, prepares a condition of receptivity in the being. The inner consciousness unrolls itself and in response to the steady aspiration in the heart, the Peace and the Light within the depths of the being flow out. The being learns to find its natural habitat in the inner depths. The movement gathers momentum during each meditation and tends to prolong itself even during other hours effortlessly. Effortlessly, we have said, because the seeker has got attuned more and more progressively to the vibrations of the other inner or higher consciousness—which is the true home of the Spirit, his soul, and he finds it hard to return to the "normal" hum-drum level. Of course in the beginning the pull outwards is too strong. But gradually it weakens and one finds that meditation has disciplined and corrected his norm, the tumultuous elements drop, each into its native serene poise. Indubitable results however are seen, naturally, in the most developed and sensitive parts of the being. One learns to allow more and more of the inner consciousness to come to the surface and inevitably all his movements now begin to proceed from a newly shifted centre, from a true spiritual base. He has now no need to "meditate". Meditation was a means to turn the mind back on itself, to its own source, and once the real nature of consciousness has become manifest to the mind, which has learned to be normally quiet, meditation as a discipline ceases to continue, but continues as part of one's nature and is *natural.*

M. P. PANDIT

# THE FUTURE POETRY*

*(continued)*

## THE BREATH OF GREATER LIFE

POETRY is the rhythmic voice of life, the infinite life of the spirit thrown out in its many creations, but it is one of the inner and not one of the surface voices. The poet's business most really, most intimately is not with the outward physical life as it is or even with some ideal life imaged by the mind, while it does not seem to matter essentially or not at the first whether his method is professedly subjective or objective. This universal truth of poetry is apt to be a little hidden from us by form and stress of preoccupation with this or that medium of outward soul-expression in the poet's work. Mankind in its development seems to begin with the most outward things and go always more and more inward in order that the race may mount to greater heights of the spiritual life. An early poetry is therefore more occupied with a simple, natural, straightforward, external presentation of life. A primitive epic bard like Homer thinks only by the way, and yet it is the adventures and trials and strength and courage of the soul of man in Odysseus which makes the greatness of the Odyssey and not merely the vivid incident and picturesque surrounding circumstance. The outward form of Shakespeare's work is a surge of emotion and passion and thought and act and event arising out of character at ferment in the yeast of feeling and passion, but it is its living interpretation of the truth and powers of the life-soul of man that are the core of greatness of his work. And whatever the outward character or form of the poetry, the law holds that poetry is a self-expressive power of the spirit and where the soul of things is most revealed in its very life by the rhythmic word, there is the fullest achievement of the poet's function.

But when intellectual thought has begun to reign in the mind of a more cultured race, the poet's difficulty also begins. For intellectual thought makes a sort of scission in our being and on the one side of the line is the vital urge carrying on life and on the other side the deliberate detached reason trying to observe it, take an intelligent view, and extract from it all its thought values. But this can only be done without detriment to the vital power of the poetic spirit and the all-seizing effect of its word, when there is a balance maintained between thought and life, as was supposed to have been done by the Greeks. But this balance is easily lost, a difficult thing, and we get more of studies of life than of creation. There is then an

* A summary of Sri Aurobindo's "The Future Poetry" (Arya 1917-1920)

attempt to get back to the natural fullness of the vital and physical life, but the endeavour fails in sincerity and success because it is impossible.

The way out lies not in cessation of thinking and the turn to a strenuous description of life, nor even in a more vitally forceful thinking, but in another kind of thought mind. This is not easily or at once reached. There are steps of ascent. But when found in all its fullness, it heals the scission between thought and life. The spirit, which alone makes possible the full thought-life, gives us not only a greater light of truth and vision, but the breath of a greater living; for the spirit is not only the self of our consciousness and knowledge, but the great self of life. To find our self and the self of things is not to go, through a rarefied ether of thought, into Nirvana, but to discover the whole greatest integral power of our complete existence. This need is the sufficient reason for attaching the greatest importance to those poets in whom there is the double seeking of this twofold power, the truth and the reality of the eternal self and spirit in man and things and the insistence on life. All the most significant and vital work in recent poetry has borne this stamp; the rest is of the hour, but this is of the future. The objection has been made that most of this poetry is too subtle and remote and goes away from the broad, near, present and vital actualities of existence. But this is to mistake the work of this poetry and to mistake too in a great manner the sense of life as it must reveal itself to the greatening mind of humanity now that is growing in world-knowledge and towards self-knowledge. These poets have not indeed done all that has to be done or given the complete poetic synthesis and fusion. Their work has been to create a new and deeper manner of seeing life, to build bridges of visioned light and rhythm between the infinite and eternal and the mind and soul and life of man. The future poetry has to step from these first fields into new and yet greater ranges, to fathom all the depths yet unplumbed. That cannot and will not be achieved in its fullness all at once, but to make a foundation of this new infinite range of poetic vision and creation is work enough to give greatness to a whole age.

The demand for activity and realism or for a direct, exact and forceful presentation of life in poetry proceeds upon a false sense of what poetry gives or can give us. None of the highest activities of the mind of man does that, even a critical or scientific thought has to go behind the frontage of appearance and make a mental reconstruction and surprising change. But the creative powers cannot stop there, but have to make new things for us as well as to make existing things new. Homer with all his epic vigour of outward presentation does not show us the heroes and deeds before Troy in their actuality as they really were to the normal vision of men.

The poetry of the future can least afford to chain itself to the outward actualities which we too often mistake for the whole of life. Poetry in the

past wrote much of the godheads and powers behind existence, but in the mask of legends and myths, but now the mind of man is opening more largely to the deepest truths of the Divine. The real faces of the gods are growing more apparent to the eye of mind, though not yet again intimate with our life. The material realm cannot for very much longer be our sole or separate world of experience, for the partitions which divide it from the psychic and other kingdoms behind it are wearing thin. A larger field of being made more real to man's experience will be the realm of the future poetry.

These things are often given an appearance of remoteness, of withdrawal from the actuality of life, because to discover them the mind had at first to draw away from the insistent outward preoccupation and live as if in a separate world. The seeker of the Self and Spirit, the God-lover, tended to become the cloistered monk, the ascetic, the mystic, the eremite and to set the spiritual apart from and against the material life. The lover of Nature went away from the noise of man and daily things to commune with her largeness and peace. And this was a legitimate seclusion and none of these things is unreal, and if the supernatural as handled by the older poets seemed often mere legend, fancy and romance, it was because it was seen from a distance by the imagination, not lived in by the soul and in its spirit, as is done by the true seer and poet of this supernature or other-nature.

But still all life is one and a new human mind moves towards the realisation of its totality and oneness. The poetry which voices the oneness and totality of our being and Nature and the worlds and God, will make the actuality of our earthly life not less but more real and rich and full and wide and living to men. The future poetry will be the voice and rhythmic utterance of our greater, our total, our infinite existence, and will give us the strong and infinite sense, the spiritual and vital joy, the exalting power of a greater breath of life.

## THE SOUL OF POETIC DELIGHT AND BEAUTY

Unless the soul and form of delight and beauty take possession of the seeing of truth and give immortality to the breath and body of the life, these are insufficient to poetic perfection. For the poet the moon of beauty and delight is a greater godhead even than the sun of truth or the breath of life, as in the symbolic image of the Vedic moon-god, Soma, whose plant of intoxication has to be gathered on lonely mountain heights in the moonlight and whose purified juice and essence is the sacred wine and nectar of sweetness, *rasa*, *madhu*, *amrita*, without which the gods themselves could not be immortal.

The imperative instinct for beauty and the aesthetic demand are now things that are almost lost, nowhere general to the human mind, but once

they were the sign of the poetic and artistic peoples and the great ages of art and poetry and supreme creation. The ancient communities which created those fine many-sided cultures that still remain the fountain-head of all our evolving civilisation, had the instinct for beauty, the aesthetic turn of the temperament and formation of mind almost, it would seem, from the beginning, planted in their spirit and their blood, colouring their outlook so that even before they got the developed intellectual consciousness of it, they created instinctively in the spirit and form of beauty and that is quite half the secret of the compelling and attractive power of the antique cultures. This is found, in different ways, in the Veda, the Upanishads, the classical writers in India, in Japan, China, Persia, ancient Greece. Contrasted with our modern notions which tend to divorce the religious, the philosophic and the spiritual from the aesthetic sense, a fusion of these is a distinguishing stamp of their art and culture. The Celtic nations seem always to have had by nature a psychic delicacy and subtlety united with an instinctive turn for imaginative beauty to which we surely owe much of the finer strain in English literature. But in the mind of later peoples there is in their cruder temperament and intelligence a barbaric strain which worships rudely the power and energy of life and is not at home with the delight of beauty, an ethical and puritanic strain which looks askance at art and beauty and pleasure, a heavy scholastic or dry, scientific intellectual strain which follows after truth with a conscientious and industrious diligence but without vision and fine aesthesis. And the modern mind, inheritor of all this, is a divided and complex mind which strives at its best to get back at the old thing on a larger scale; it is besides still labouring under the disadvantage of its aberration into a mechanical, economical, materialistic, utilitarian civilisation from which it cannot get free. The day when we can get back to the ancient worship of delight and beauty will be our day of salvation; for without these things there can be neither an assured nobility and sweetness in poetry and art, nor a satisfied dignity and fullness of life nor a harmonious perfection of the spirit.

The obstacle to an insufficiently profound and intimate perception of the real deep soul of poetic delight and beauty comes from the peculiar character of the modern intelligence and its want of harmony between our internal selves and our external experience. The spirit of man can make its home, as did the Indians, the Chinese or with a little difficulty the Greeks, in either one of two things, the depths of our self through vision of self-knowledge, through power of self-mastery or through ecstasy, or a profound, a glad and satisfied acceptance of the truth, the delight and beauty of the world and life, of existence and experience. The modern mind on the contrary looks little into our deepest self, and concentrates not on the truth and delight and beauty of life, but upon the stress of its results and circumstance,

and on the agitating or attractive turmoil of the mind excited by their contact or their siege.[1] This difference results in a fundamental difference of aesthesis. The pure aesthetic spirit ought to be left free, trusted in, master of its action and creation, but we now make the aesthetic sense and intelligence a servant of other powers. It is condemned to serve first and foremost our external interest in life, thought, our troubled personality. This aesthesis aided by the vast curiosity of the modern intelligence has done some great and much interesting work, but that is surely not enough.

There is a profound intrinsic delight and beauty in all things and behind all experience, whatever face it wears to the surface mind. This deeper spiritual feeling, this Ananda is the fountain of poetic delight and beauty. It springs from a supreme essence of experience, a supreme aesthesis, which is in its own nature spiritual, impersonal, and that is why the poet is able to transmute pain and sorrow and the most tragic and terrible and ugly things into forms of poetic beauty. This Ananda is not the pleasure of a mood or a sentiment or the fine aesthetic indulgence of the sense in the attraction of a form, superficial results and incidents which are often mistaken for that much deeper and greater thing by the minor poetic faculty, the lesser artistic mind, but the enduring delight which, as the ancient idea justly perceived, is the essence of spirit and being and the beauty which all things assume when the spirit lives in the pure joy of creation and experience.

The universality of this delight and beauty does not mean that we can take, whatever we will, straight from life and experience, just as it is, and by making it precise and vivid through word and image or dressing it in imaginative colour achieve poetic effect and beauty. That is the theory by which a great deal of our modern endeavour at poetry seems to be guided, but that is to confuse the sources of poetic delight and beauty with the more superficial interest, pain and pleasure which the normal mind takes in the first untransmuted appeal of thought and life and feeling. The poet has in him a double personality, a double instrument of his response to life and existence. There is in him the normal man absorbed in mere living, who thinks and feels and acts like others, and there is the seer of things, the supernormal man, the super-soul or delight-soul in touch with the impersonal and eternal fountains of joy and beauty who creates from that source and transmutes by its alchemy all experience into a form of the spirit's Ananda.

This rapture, the Platonic divine possession and enthusiasm, is born not of mental but of soul experience, and the more the surface mind gets

[1] This is the result perhaps of an ill-assimilated Christian influence intervening on the external vitalism of the Teutonic temperament and on Latin intellectualism, and bringing in new needs and experiences which disturbed the mind and emotions without possessing the soul with peace or arriving at a harmony of spiritual emotion and spiritual self-knowledge.

into the way, the more this divine passion is weakened and diluted by a less potent spirit. The poetry which insists on an external effectiveness fails because it is concerned with immediately vital things perhaps, but not with that which is immortal. That is just why, patriotic poetry, war poetry or poetry of the occasion and the moment are so difficult to write greatly; the drama of action and mere passion is for the same reason short-lived in its gusto of vitality, while the drama of the soul abides, because it gets near to the subtler eternal element; philosophical and religious poetry too fails so often by a neglect of the same fine distinction. The mental and vital interest, pleasure, pain of thought, life, action is not the source of poetic delight and beauty and can be turned into that deeper thing only when they have been sunk into the soul and been transmuted in the soul's radiant memory into spiritual experience. The poetic delight and beauty are born of a deeper rapture and not of the surface mind's excited interest and enjoyment of life and existence.

The ancient Indian critics defined the essence of poetry as *rasa* and by that word they meant a concentrated taste, a spiritual essence of emotion, an emotional aesthesis, the soul's pleasure in the pure and perfect sources of feeling. These sources, which come from a level above the normal mind, when we know better the secrets of our being, turn out to be the spiritual self with its diviner consciousness and knowledge, happier fountains of power, inalienable delights of existence. The cultures that were able to feel this Ananda had in that the secret, the generalised instinct for beauty which has been denied to a later mind; we have to go back for it to exceptional individuals gifted with a finer strain, but the widespread aesthetic instinct has been lost and has yet to be recovered for the common mind. But this Ananda works, like poetic truth or the breath of life, on different levels, in different provinces of its action, with the same law that we have observed in the rest, of the emergence of the richer and profounder face of itself, the more it gets inward and upward from the less to the more occult powers of its revelation. It throws itself out, successively, on the physical mind and being, fuses into itself the experiences of the life-soul, takes up all life and form into the reflective thought-mind. But when that intuitive mind, self-finding, self-seeing, self-creating in a higher power of light and vision that is possible on the intellectual or other levels gets out into full play, we come nearer to the most potent sources of universal delight and beauty.

The beauty and delight of such a greater intuitive inspiration, a poetry of this spiritual Ananda making all existence luminous and wonderful and beautiful to us may be one of the gifts of the future. It is that of which we stand in need and of which there is some promise in the highest strains that we have now begun to hear. At one time poetry had been creative

of the life of the people. One might almost say that ancient India was created by the Veda and Upanishads and that the visions of inspired seers made a people. The Mahabharata and Ramayana have played a formative part second only to religion and the stress of religio-social training in the life of the Indian peoples. The effect of the Homeric poems in Greece springs from a similar but less steep height of poetic and artistic motive; it revealed the Hellenic people to itself. But in other times and places poetry has been more a servant of aesthetic pleasure, leaned too much on the surface or external interests of life and intellect and imagination, and failed too much to create life from within by a deeper delight in the power of vision of the soul and spirit, a creative master of life and great spiritual agent. Since Chaucer the high energy of English poetry has done great and interesting things; in the face of all this splendour and vigour and glow and beauty and of the undeniable cultural influence, it may seem hard to say that something was too often lacking which would have made the power of this poetry more central and intimate and a greater direct force on the life of the people, and yet this is, I think, true in spite of exceptions, not only here, but of almost all the later European literature. To get back to a profounder centre, to create from within in a more universal spirit and its vision of delight of existence will supply the missing element and make poetry once again young and mighty and creative and its word deeply effective on life by the power of a great Ananda.

SISIR KUMAR GHOSH

## A SIDELIGHT ON MATERIALISM

THE scientific account of the complex of agencies involved in sense-perception is worth viewing in its correct bearings on the question whether materialism is a valid doctrine.

There is a tendency today in certain scientific quarters to declare: "Matter is only the version which sense-perception gives of an unknown reality. An impact comes upon the sense-organs; the nerve-terminals are stimulated; nerve-currents start moving; they reach the brain-cells and there is sense-perception as of actual objective matter existing. Now, evidently, the perception is an image. What proof have we that this image is true? Verification, in science, is always by seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling or touching. Yet, whether we see, hear, taste, smell or touch, we have nothing except sense-perception: that is, an image, in the broad connotation of the term. So there is no means of verifying sense-perception. At most we may aim at

correlating the various sides of it. We cannot get beyond it. Hence we have on the one hand an image of the world and on the other the unknown world itself. Scientifically, we can be said to work not on the world itself but on an image of it produced by sense-organs, nerve-terminals, nerve-currents and brain-cells, and therefore there is no proof of the world being matter rather than a non-material reality which is imaged by us as material."

What shall be our comment on this declaration? Only one thing: it is capital balderdash. We cannot with logical consistency talk of an unknown world acting on the sense-organs and affecting the nerve-terminals and sending messages in the form of nerve-currents to the brain-cells, when clearly those very organs and terminals and currents and cells involve actual objective material existence of the precise sort which is said to be in doubt! We as good as say: "The material world as a real entity comes to be in doubt only if sense-organs, nerve-terminals, nerve-currents and brain-cells which are part of the same world really exist to receive the impact of the unknown reality which alone is their actual objective cause as it is also the sole objective cause of everything else in that world." Utter self-contradiction is here. Is it not plain that the whole complex of agencies said to be responding to the unknown reality's impact should itself fall under the category of image? How can we assume that these agencies are what we take them to be? Are they not as much part of the image-world as anything else we call by that name? Eyes are as much an image as floating clouds; ears, as breaking waves; noses, as violets and dew-drenched dust; tongues, as bits of sugar and pieces of salt; hands, as hard or soft clothes, rough or smooth wood-work, hot or cold steel, regular or irregular stones; nerve-terminals, as blades of grass and strings of thread; nerve-currents, as running streams and drifts of air; brain-cells, as diamond-beads and flower-seeds. So we should be driven to declare that our image of the world is itself produced by means of images, or that images interact with the world and give us our image of it! This is unmitigated meaninglessness, a vicious circle, if our conclusion is intended to be that the world's nature is not material as our sense-perceptions incline us to believe.

To account for the image of the world, a particular set of images seems to be already granted, and we cannot use this particular set to account for itself. In other words, we cannot hold that the images of sense-organs, nerve-terminals, nerve-currents and brain-cells are due to sense-organs, nerve-terminals, nerve-currents and brain-cells. Either these things really exist as matter or they are a mere image. Call them a mere image and we have no means of accounting for the world-image of matter. Call them real material existences, and we have no ground for refusing real material existence to the rest of the world, for we have already conceded the materiality which was at debate!

If sense-organs, nerve-terminals, nerve-currents and brain-cells do not exist actually and objectively as matter, there can be for science no sense-perception and not even the image of any world. The scientific image-theory can make meaning only after we have granted that the image we have of the world is essentially a true reflection of what exists. Then there will be real sense-organs, real nerve-terminals, real nerve-currents, real brain-cells—all essentially what they seem to us, material existences receiving an impact from the world and getting the world truly imaged. This, of course, does not preclude incomplete imaging or a variation of image-structure depending on position and state of the receiving entity. Nor does it preclude error or illusion: in fact, there is no point in even speaking of error or illusion unless we can say we know what it is *not* to be committing an error or to be suffering from an illusion. But the granting of essential truth of image *does* preclude in science the possibility of the world being not the material existence we believe it to be on the evidence of the image we have of it. We must either accept the image as essentially true or repudiate the whole image-theory in its scientific garb. Scientifically, we can have only a fact of interaction between different parts of the world, resulting in the production of a true image which tells us that the world is material.

This conclusion does not prejudice the issue whether the ultimate constituent of matter is material or no. Two points, however, need to be stressed. First, we must ask: is the ultimate constituent of matter experienceable by the senses? If it can be experienced by the senses, even theoretically though not practically, it would have to be classed as matter. If it cannot be experienced, it must be considered in science a hypothesis and not a verified fact. Secondly, even if it be non-material, we do not negate the existence of matter. For, the moment we deem matter a mere image, this constituent would be reduced also to the status of an image: we arrive at it by studying and analysing matter and as soon as matter is refused actual objective existence its constituent cannot remain in existence actually and objectively. Matter can never be cavalierly brushed away.

If we wish to assert that our image of the world gives us no genuine indication of what the world is like, we must stop arguing on the lines of sense-organs, nerve-terminals, nerve-currents and brain-cells and begin with pure consciousness and say that in perception we have only a certain kind of contents of consciousness and that we have no notion of what outside our consciousness makes the contents such and such. Here we go clean beyond scientific imagism and land in sheer philosophy, with three further steps to consider. These steps are:(1) solipsism, the belief in the existence of nothing except oneself, because everything and everyone figuring in perception are just the contents of one's own consciousness;(2) pluralism of consciousness, the belief in the existence of many conscious beings who

carry their own contents of consciousness and who interact among themselves; (3) objectivism, the belief in an outer world other than one's own consciousness and composed of other conscious beings and of an unknown reality whose impact makes the perception-contents of each consciousness such and such.

Naturally the philosopher has to start with his own consciousness—in this case, the perception-contents of it. But surely they have a certain involuntary character, we seem to suffer perception and not to will it, there is a given-ness about it which appears to go beyond the "I" 's wishful activity. Every time we stumble against a stone, are dazzled by a flash or hear a disagreeable bang, we realise that sense-perception is not always according to our wishes. A strict solipsism centring in the "I" which one knows from day to day is, therefore, unconvincing. There must be a world outside this "I". But is that world composed only of other "I"s who interact with one's own? To multiply the "I" s is not to solve the difficulty raised by the involuntariness, sufferance and given-ness noticeable in perception by each "I". Besides, if one goes beyond one's own "I" to acknowledge other "I"s there is no reason to deny outside existence to many other entities. Thus the whole familiar universe comes back. But because of our special starting-point in pure consciousness, a starting-point which does not presuppose the actual material existence of sense-organs, nerve-terminals, nerve-currents and brain-cells, we are under no logical obligation to consider the universe material. An alternative is left us of conceiving it in non-material terms.

Strong reasons can be put forth either way. The final decision must be given according as the materialistic or the non-materialistic view explains and correlates the largest range of facts. But it may be mentioned that even the non-materialistic view can be of several kinds, as is obvious from the host of idealist, religious and spiritual philosophies. The kind which is perhaps most in tune with the starting-point in one's own consciousness is that which holds the involuntariness, sufferance and given-ness noticeable in perception to be due to perception's coming to the "I" from some wider range of one's own being, some range normally hidden. We have actual awareness of memories, desires, thoughts, visualisations getting into focus out of concealed regions of our own being. Those regions could very well be the cause and creator of our perception. And when we weigh the sense of vastness in that aspect of perception which we call the universe, it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that the wider hidden regions are ultimately an infinite Consciousness, sole and supreme. But there is nothing inconsistent if the infinite Consciousness has many finite consciousnesses as its self-formulations and has also a world-order as another self-formulation for presentation to those finite consciousnesses through a particular perceiving arrangement, namely, sense-experience, which produces the

impression of materiality. In fact, to regard the sole and supreme Consciousness in such a light harmonises best with the picture our perception gives us—the picture of many finite beings and a world-order. Then we shall have an outer world other than each consciousness and in that world other conscious beings and a hidden reality to be perceived as material. At the same time we shall have an explanation of why the hidden reality comes in an essentially common form to the various conscious beings: it comes so because, on the one hand, the same hidden reality is presented to them and, on the other, the same supreme Consciousness is their secret Self of selves.

Commencing with consciousness we can arrive at a non-materialistic philosophy in which the living core of solipsism is combined both with pluralism of beings and with objectivism. This way of thinking, however, simply ignores science as a starting-point, though by granting objectivism it leaves room for all the materiality of the world which we have seen to be inevitable in the scientific account of sense-perception. And here the image we have of the world is taken to be essentially true and still spiritual: a material world is accepted as producing a true image of its materiality, but the materiality is seen to be the self-formulation of a supreme Consciousness. In the case of scientific as distinguished from philosophic imagism, we cannot go beyond materiality. So it is of no use as a weapon against materialists and does not, *per se*, provide any possibility of a non-materialistic interpretation of the world or of affirming that science is based only on images and therefore true knowledge lies beyond science.

All the same, we must not forget in what context scientific imagism stultifies itself. If the world-image is taken to be possibly different from what the world realy is like, we end in swallowing our own tails. But if the world-image is taken to give a correct notion of the world, then while the immediate conclusion is the world's materiality a new problem arises whose solution cannot help being non-materialistic. The problem is: how is it that the stimulation of nerve-terminals produces a true image of the world? Our mode of perceiving carries no guarantee of the image corresponding with the object: on the contrary, the odds are that the image has a correspondence with the object in the same sort of way in which a catalogue has a correspondence with the thing catalogued. Take the fact of vision. Supposing that a coloured tree actually exists, how can we acquire a true image of it? Light is reflected from the coloured tree, conveying signs of its colour and its boundaries in the form of vibrations that have a certain frequency and pattern. These vibrations impinge on the nerve-terminals in our eyes, but how do the brain-cells, to which the nerve-currents go, translate the currents into the sensation of seeing a coloured tree? Neither the vibrations nor the nerve-currents were treelike either in colour or shape. How do the colour and shape of the tree manage to be transported by them? Code-

messages are all we get: how are they correctly decoded by us? What effectuates a genuine perception? The nature of the means of perception seems likely to leave us completely in the dark as to the true character of the world of so-called matter. And yet, as we have reasoned, it is impossible at the same time to hold the scientific view of perception and deny an essential correspondence between image and object. Commonsense has always accepted an essential correspondence, and logic confirms commonsense in the teeth of a seeming to the contrary. But when we try to understand how the image-world and the real world could tally, science has no illuminating word for us.

The sole means by which here the impossible can happen is some sort of intuitive activity on our part. It is as though our consciousness had a direct touch on the world, bringing a knowledge of what is outside our consciousness by a going forth and getting intimate with it and then interpreting the nerve-messages in the light of that intimacy! Otherwise there can never be any definite ground for the truth of our perception. But this manner of attaining essential correspondence is nothing that materialism can explain or allow. A secret extra-sensory perception, an occult supernormal knowledge, a direct intuitive comprehension, a cognition by some degree of identity—this is at work behind the conditions imposed by an arrangement of external stimulus and sense-response. In the very act of perceiving matter to be matter we have a non-materialistic phenomenon without which there would be utter ignorance of the world's nature. Hence, while refusing to be drawn towards a non-materialistic conclusion by way of a supposed ignorance of the world's nature, we are pushed inevitably into a view of perception which breaks sheer through the formula of materialism. But there is, of course, all the difference between the right mode and the wrong of getting to the non-materialistic discovery.

K. D. SETHNA

# THE MESSAGE

A FIGURE that seemed to be part of the gloom around him was standing on the bridge of Time gazing at the river of Life flowing under him. It was Naren. Other figures came out of the gloom and tried to talk to him but he kept on staring at the flowing water. They showed him with great eagerness the bubbles on its foam which seemed to them precious treasures, but he only turned his face away. They left him and ran after the bubbles. He stood there alone, absorbed in himself. The night's hush fell upon him and he became oblivious of his surroundings. Then, as if in answer to a hidden longing in his soul, the air around him started vibrating and the darkness faded revealing clouds of golden light. A luminous Figure of infinite beauty came walking through the clouds towards him and very softly asked, "What dost thou want?" As soon as Naren heard the voice of this Figure, the chimes of Heaven started ringing in his ears and he heard the music that is played beyond the stars; his eyes were filled with the wonder-light of a supernal radiance and for one brief moment he remembered the glories he had once seen. He just stood there entranced and could not utter a word. The Figure asked him again, "What dost thou want?" Very slowly Naren managed to speak out, "Knowledge and Transfiguration." The Figure smiled and replied, "Be it as thou sayest," and thus began, "There is no beginning and no ending as men seem to think. All is an unfolding of that which is eternally there in the being of the One Supreme, a progressive manifestation of that which is there for all Time, and beyond Time out of the Time-movement. He, the One Supreme, is both the Unmanifest and the Manifest at the same time and the whole cosmic movement is a self-manifestation. The Supreme Being, the One Divine, manifests Himself to Himself in Himself. He who is pure Existence: Consciousness–Force: Bliss and Truth becomes the World Existence which evolves from Darkness to Light through its own self-conscious centre of concentration, the individual. He becomes in Time, in form and movement, what He essentially is in substance and status out of the Time-movement. He, the One Self, Sole and Absolute, Eternal and Infinite, has become His own Other Self, the World-Existence, the Many, though always remaining the One, and has worn the cloak of Finitude by shutting out Himself from Himself. The World-Existence is the Supreme self-absorbed in a dark trance of Inconscience out of which He is slowly rising towards His own luminous Self.

History is the progress of His march through Time trying to find Himself again; but the meeting on earth between Him and His wandering Other

Self, the fusion of the two Godheads that are yet one, shall be the birth of the Godman, the Gnostic Being. Therefore, the Transfiguration has to take place not up there, as you suppose, but down here on earth."

Naren was stunned when he heard these words. No being had spoken like this ever before. Very timidly he ventured to say, "But how can a mere man achieve this?" The Figure replied, "It should be man's unshakable faith that God dwells in him, even though at first he cannot see Him or contact Him. As there is God in him, such a Transfiguration should not be impossible. If in essence man were different from what God is, the possibility of such a consummation may be remote, but as he is made of the very stuff of divinity, it is inevitable that in a progressive manifestation of this nature he should one day reveal this divinity."

"But what are the conditions necessary to attain this?" asked Naren.

"Aspiration," came the reply. "An aspiration that rises like a flame towards the Supreme, an aspiration that is a mute prayer rising from the inmost heart of the mortal towards its Lord. It can call from below the Divine Grace which is always leaning down to purify and transform the mortal and raise him up to his divine status. Then, faith is necessary; faith that such a Transfiguration is not only possible but is inevitable even though in the beginning the reason fails to comprehend its necessity or its inevitability. Only an unfaltering faith can carry the seeker on its wide wings and sustain him through the various trials he has to pass on his way to his divine goal. Rejection is also necessary; a firm will in the seeker to reject all the movements of his lower nature which lead him away from his goal. But aspiration, faith and rejection are incomplete without surrender, a surrender of the entire being—of all that one has and all that one is." Then he paused for a moment and said very softly, "Without giving up the Darkness that is in oneself one cannot receive the Light, for where shall the Light stay when it descends if Darkness is securely lodged in its place?" Again looking at Naren He continued, "A constant sincere and intense aspiration can call down the Divine Grace, and faith and surrender can open the being to Its Light and Power and allow It to effect the Transfiguration. Without the help of this descending Divine Grace man's efforts at self-perfection can only lead to frustration and disillusionment. But, one must seek this Transfiguration not for its own sake but for the sake of the Divine whose will one has to manifest on this earth. Now follow thou me." So saying He turned around and started walking into His own Light. Without the slightest hesitation Naren followed Him. They floated for a time through iridescent clouds and then came to the place where Time stands still and gazes into Eternity.

Suddenly Naren stopped; before him stood another form, a Figure of transparent silver whiteness out of whom rays of white light were radiating

in all directions. When Naren looked into Her eyes, a ray seemed to dart out of Her and rush into him. He fell at Her feet in adoration and worship. His Guide started speaking again, "You shall not see me often, but we shall meet through Her, for indeed She and I are one, as you shall soon know." Both of them started walking and Naren followed. They came to a phosphorescent plateau of crystal gold whose expanse seemed to know no bounds. The air here was so rarefied that Naren could hardly breathe. Millions of rays of various hues and intensities seemed to be emanating in all directions from some invisible centre whose reflected light could only be seen on a gold-blue veil which stretched over the plateau like a sky. Each ray had a star-like form behind it and seemed to be part of it. His Guide turned round and said, "This is the highest world of the Gods and beyond is the abode of the Supreme." Before Naren could understand what He was saying, their forms all at once started changing. She became a flaming Torch of crimson-white fire and He became a golden Sun. Then slowly the white fire of the Torch mingled with the golden light of the Sun and became a mighty Flame the sight of which blinded him. The pressure on his head and the pounding in his heart became so intense that he fell into a swoon. The Flame disappeared behind the golden veil.

When Naren woke up again he looked all around him crying, "Where have you gone, what shall I do without you?" Then as if like a holy chant floating through the skies came a voice—

> My son,
> Seek not kingdoms to conquer, nor continents of gold,
> Salvation, Nirvana nor the Angel's Throne of old,
> But seek to be My instrument divine
> To manifest on earth My Will and Design.

Naren listened and felt happy. All around him grew dark again and he found himself looking at the flowing water under him, but to his great surprise he discovered that he was shining like a little starlet. He humbly bowed down his head as he realised that his light was only an emanation the greater Lights had graciously given him.

S. R. Albless

# THE VALE OF TEARS

IS there any truth in the wail of the pessimist that this world is a vale of tears, that man's life here is but a passing period of trial and tribulation and that happiness can be achieved only in another world, in a life hereafter? This morbid outlook on terrestrial life was entirely foreign to the spirit and temperament of our ancient sages who accepted life cheerfully and strove to realise the Truth of God here on earth, in the midst of life's activities. The world-shunning spirit of a later day was not abroad yet, and man was told that the world was for him to enjoy without attachment and without greed. It was enjoined that he should desire to live a hundred years here on earth doing his Karma. Great is the perdition, he was warned, if Brahman be not realised by him in the manifested world. Verily, all this is the Brahman, asserted the Vedantic sage—all beings, all things, all acts, all emotions, even all that there is. Having realised the Supreme, says the Kena Upanishad, in each and every becoming of His, the wise man on leaving this plane attains immortality. This Supreme was realised by the ancients as Sachchidananda—a Conscious Existent, the very term of whose consciousness is Delight. He was also realised as Truth, Good and Beauty—the highest truth, the highest good, the highest beauty. The idea of the Vedantin is thus clear—all is true and good and beautiful, all is puissant and blissful in the Supreme, the active as well as the inactive Divine. The Taittiriya Upanishad laying stress on the aspect of Ananda (bliss) says: "From Delight all these beings are born. In Delight they exist and grow, to Delight they return."

This bright and healthy outlook on the world did not, however, last long. Soon a cheerless gloom got hold of the Hindu's mind and he sang despairingly: "Sinful am I, sinful are my acts, sinful is my soul and in sin was I begotten." A heavy load of helplessness bore down on the Hindu and crushed out all enthusiasm, all joy of existence. Life became to him an unreality, a lure, a phantasy. This cheerless mood overcame not only the Illusionists proper of the schools of Buddha or Shankara, but also the followers of other cults that had never accepted the unreality of this world. In Sri Aurobindo's words, "all have lived in the shadow of the great refusal and the final end of life for all is the garb of the ascetic."

In Europe, we find that the ancient Greeks and Romans, generally speaking, were on the best of terms with their gods and goddesses and look upon earthly life as a divine gift to be enjoyed with gratefulness. Like the Vedic Hindus, they looked upon their deities as benevolent friends and not as severe judges and cruel executioners. Fear of punishment, therefore,

did not in any way influence their outlook on life as was the case with so many other peoples of the ancient world. But this state of things did not endure in Europe after the fall of the Romans. The barbarian chiefs who inherited their power found something attractive in the simple Christian faith, then quite new, and they easily submitted to the guidance of the Father of that faith in matters temporal as well as spiritual. The result was an attempt at a complete regimentation of life in accordance with the narrow and severe standards of Judœo-Christian morality. Nothing was left to individual reason; the Church decided what books could be read, what thoughts could be thought and what opinions could be held. Bans and interdicts, pardons and indulgences, became the order of the day during these dark centuries. Galileos and Brunos, small and great, who dared to think, were put out of the way mercilessly. Still the remnants of the classical spirit imparted, at least in Italy, a certain colourfulness to life, and real pessimism did not establish itself in Europe till the advent of the Calvins and the Knoxes. In the eyes of the Puritan everything that was delightful and beautiful in life was a lure of the Devil and was to be rejected sternly. This spirit could not possibly last and the pendulum swung right round. A period dominated by the Nell Gwynnes, Montespans and Pompadours set in and gradually brought along the French Revolution and the Nineteenth Century, when reason was installed as the final authority in all human affairs, internal and external. Worship of wealth and power, satisfaction of desire and passion, pursuit of pleasure and excitement became man's principal occupation. What this has led up to in our century we see clearly. The mad chase of luxury and wealth and power continues unabated and Ananda appears to be receding farther and farther. A crisis has overtaken the world, and we are called upon to revise our sense of values. The ascetic East must realise that the world he despises is also the Brahman and naught else. The power-intoxicated West must likewise realise that Matter which is object of his worship is naught but the Spirit. When these two realisations come, man will be in a position to understand the significance of the Delight that pervades the world and to comprehend that pain is as much an aspect of that Delight as pleasure.

When we consider more closely the sensations known as pleasure and pain, we find that they belong entirely to our outer consciousness—the consciousness that pertains to our separative egoistic existence. When we enter right within ourselves and dwell in our inner consciousness, we are unaware of any such contrary sensations. Man's inner consciousness is that in which he sees all existences in himself and himself in all existences, and shrinks not thereafter from aught. That shrinking or repulsion is connected with sorrow, and attraction with joy, is fairly obvious. A man awakened to the higher consciousness not being attracted or repelled by

anything, can know neither joy nor sorrow, neither pleasure nor pain. The Isha Upanishad says: "He in whom it is the Self-Being that has become all existences that are Becomings, for He has the perfect knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief, who sees everywhere oneness?"

On this level, there is no possibility of sorrow; all is seen in the terms of the infinite conscious existence, the infinite will, the infinite felicity. Grief and pain are seen to be perverse terms of the supreme bliss. They veil that bliss and prepare the lower existence for it. All suffering in the evolution, says Sri Aurobindo, is a preparation for strength and bliss. The soul liberated and perfected by Knowledge seizes and enjoys the self-delight of the Divine that underlies everything. The passage from the lower to the higher consciousness spells this freedom from attraction and repulsion, delusion and sorrow.

Again, from the point of view of our Yoga there cannot be any absolute pleasure or pain any more than there can be any absolute knowledge and ignorance. These apparently contrary things are relative and not mutually exclusive. A thing in creation can be comparatively painful or comparatively agreeable but it can never be absolutely painful or absolutely pleasureable. When, however, we speak of divine bliss, it is undoubtedly absolute, for it means the Supreme Self-Delight of the Divine. All sorrow, all suffering in the evolution is a preparation for that Delight. Sri Aurobindo in one of his letters says: "the delight of existence emerges from the original insentience first in the forms of pleasure and pain and then has to find itself in the bliss of the Spirit . . . the bliss of the Brahman."

This bliss of the Brahman is not however restricted to Its inactive and immobile Self. It is capable of infinite variation, capable of revelling in its numberless becomings. The wise man attains immortality only by realising the divine Self-Delight in each and every form in the universe.

But in the ordinary human mind, involved as it is in its outer consciousness, the objection arises: "If there be this Self-Delight pervading everything, how can we account for universal grief and suffering?" Some philosophers have denied pleasure as a positive thing. In their opinion pain alone is positive in life and that it is only by avoiding pain that man can have the sensation which he calls pleasure. There are many ways of avoiding sorrow and pain. One of them, the most potent, is concentration on a definite object. The duration of your concentration is the measure of the duration of your sense of pleasure. The more lasting the object of your concentration, the more lasting is your happiness. The greater that object is, the greater is your happiness. It is unnecessary to dilate on this theory here, for we know from actual experinece that grief and suffering are by no means universal, that the sum-total of the pleasure of being exceeds

by far the sum-total of pain. It appears otherwise only because pleasure and happiness are normal in life while pain and suffering are abnormal; grief or pain when it comes we take as an outrage, as something unexpected which, in consequence, hurts us all the more. But the question of abnormality apart, why should there be any pain at all? How can a God who is all-delight and all-love inflict pain on his creatures? To say that He imposes a trial and inflicts a punishment is not helpful. Why did a benevolent creator create a world where torture or cruelty should be necessary? The aspect, however changes completely when we realise that the Divine is immanent in each thing or being that he has created, and that any torture he inflicts is self-inflicted. But even then, our quibbling mind asks, how did Sachchidananda come to admit in himself something that is not Ananda or good or love? The question however does not arise unless we set up a division between the creator and the created, between creature and creature. As we have already seen, there can be neither attraction nor repulsion, neither grief nor delusion, where there is no sense of separativeness. One real difficulty in our accepting a principle of universal bliss is our human ethical standpoint. But ethical outlook is merely a midway stage between the infra-ethical and the supra-ethical in the course of evolution. What is common to all stages is "the satisfaction of conscious-force of existence developing itself into forms and seeking in that development its delight." Grief and pain intervene in the passage from the lower to the higher forms. Pleasure and pain, attraction and repulsion, as the human mind understands these terms, are occasional movements influenced by outside causes. Delight of being is self-existent and universal, and is independent of external things. When the self-delight of Brahman seeks to realise itself in creation, it goes through various forms of movement in evolution,—from Matter to Life, from Life to Mind and from Mind to Beyond-mind. Joy and sorrow appear as dualities in the course of this development from inconscience to supercon-science. As God in the individual goes up towards a universal existence, there is a movement towards the realisation of universal objectless self-delight in the flux of particular objects. What we now seek as stimulating causes of a transient pleasure and satisfaction, we shall not seek on the higher plane but shall "possess as reflectors rather than causes of a delight which eternally exists."

Sat, Chit and Ananda—Existence, Consciousness and Bliss—are in reality one; they appear as three only to our divided mentality. In creation the delight of being of the One moves out into the infinitely variable delight of becoming, but the inalienable Self-delight of the Creator underlies and supports all worldly experiences through the dual sensation of pleasure and pain that is outward—"a superficial arrangement created by that limited part of ourselves which is apparent in our waking consciousness."

But there must be something in us behind this arrangement, something greater and deeper than our external consciousness, something that takes delight equally and impartially in all happenings, in all experiences. This equal and absolute delight is hidden from us, or is only imperfectly glimpsed at times. But when we go into ourselves and learn to dwell within, we come into contact with our more real self, a calm joyful and puissant presence, which is the radiation of the Lord within. We feel that this self is supporting our outer being and smiling benevolently at its joys and sorrows, as the parent smiles at the errors and regrets of his little child. This presence within is the vast Bliss-Self ever seated behind our outer mental self, the truth that underlies the appearance. Pleasure or pain is a response that we make as a matter of habit to a particular contact. But we are not by any means bound to make any particular kind of response. We can, if we want to, transcend habit and give a response of pleasure where we used to respond by a sensation of pain. More than this, we can step out of the mechanical habit of Nature altogether and give a reply of free delight out of the vast and infinite Bliss-Self within us. The nervous being in man is much more a creature of habit than the mental being. It is elated by victory, and depressed by defeat; sugar in the mouth gives it pleasure while bitter wormwood gives it displeasure; all this occurs as by habit, mechanically. The mind, on the other hand, is much more flexible; it can, if it chooses, alter its habitual reactions. It can meet defeat and wormwood with indifference; or it can even meet them with pleasure and joy. The less therefore a man is governed by his nerves and body, and the more he is dominated by his mind, the greater is his freedom from the power and pressure of outer contacts.

But we may ask, does this apply to physical pleasure and pain? For pain can be physical as much as mental. We know that in a state of high excitement or exultation man very often does not feel physical pain. Usually he reverts to his normal sensitiveness when the excitement subsides, but he may not always do so. Again, by hypnosis a man's habitual waking consciousness may be sent to sleep and he may be put under the influence of his inner mental being who has complete control over his nerves and body. He will then be in a position for the time being to be absolute master of his nervous reactions. But this freedom which is effected in hypnosis by another's will may be gained equally well, but more normally, by one's own effort.

From what we have said already, it is clear that pain is a device of Nature intended to achieve a definite transitional end in evolution. The individual man in this world has to suffer innumerable shocks from his surroundings. Pain is his natural recoil from harmful or dangerous impacts. As long as a man is ego-bound, as long as his mind is bound in his life and body, it

must submit to this recoil. But when he has transcended his ego, when he is one with other beings, when his mind is in tune with the cosmic mind, pain and suffering cease to have any utility in his evolution and are bound to diminish progressively and cease ultimately.

Pain and pleasure being perverse or diminished currents of the supreme Delight can certainly be eliminated. There is an essence of this Delight in every being and everything. It is only because, being ego-bound, we do not seek the essence but see only the way, in which a thing or being affects our desires and cravings, fears and shrinkings that we have to undergo the perverse sensations of pleasure and pain. If we desire to be free from them, we must transcend the narrow limits of this our ego-bound existence.

It must be noted, however, that a free possession of inalienable Delight has nothing to do with the pursuit of mundane pleasure or the seeking of luxury and ease. The smiling Hedonist is as far from the seeker of divine Self-delight as the doleful pessimist. Nor is an appreciation of beauty, an aesthetic reception of earthly contacts, a true image or reflection of pure Delight which belongs to the Supramental plane. The pursuit of either beauty or ease is an earthly affair altogether and implies an admission of the existence of grief and sorrow.

The emergence of Sachchidananda in this creation is the aim of evolution. As we go higher in the scale of evolution we get nearer the realisation of the Delight that underlies everything.

"Man, the individual has to become and to live as a universal being; his limited mental consciousness has to widen to superconscient unity in which each embraces all; his narrow heart has to learn the infinite embrace and replace its lusts and discords by universal love and his restricted vital being to become equal to the whole shock of the universe upon it and capable of universal delight; his very physical being has to know itself.....as one with .....the whole flow of indivisible Force that is all things;.....Through all this play the secret reality is always one and the same delight of existence."

The world we dwell in is thus very far from being the pessimist's vale of tears. The following passage from Tagore is full of meaning :

> Joyous, indeed, is Thy world, so full of beauty and delight.
> By my own fault I suffer pain, pursuing my own desires.

( *Free rendering* )

C. C. DUTT

# QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE HIGHER KNOWLEDGE ACCORDING TO THE KATHOPANISHAD

THE qualifications which the aspirant to Brahma Vidya should possess before he can be accepted or initiated by the Guru have been laid down in the Vedantic literature to be Viveka, Vairagya, Shat-sampatti ( shama, dama, uparati, titiksha, shraddha and samadhana) and Mumukshatva. The discriminating thought and meditative insight which perceives the difference between the eternal and the transient, the Atma and the Anatma is Viveka. Renunciation of worldly objects and desires, non-attachment to fruits of action, and the drawing back of the mind from the bonds of the transient is Vairagya. Control of the mind, control of the senses, a recoil from desire for enjoyment, a calm patient endurance and steadfastness, an aspiring and unwavering inner faith, possession of equality or equipoise are the six requisites of discipline included in the third category. The last one Mumukshatva insists on intense yearning for liberation and the holding fast to the Eternal. These are now usually regarded as the "sadhana chatushtaya" or the fourfold discipline of the aspirant.

But in the earlier literature we do not find that these qualifications have been systematically arranged or specifically enumerated, but it can never be doubted that "What is other than the known and beyond the unknown" can only be realised by a special inner discipline, which transcends the purely intellectual methods of the mere thinker. In fact, in the Kathopanishad we find it explicitly laid down that not even by the study of several traditional scriptures or by intellectual thinking or by hearing numerous teachers can you attain the goal. And the seers of the Upanishads have thrown out brief hints or veiled suggestions regarding the prerequisites of the Yoga-sadhanas. It should therefore be useful for us to study in this article what the *adhikara*, fitness, capacity or qualification which an ancient work like the Kathopanishad indicates as necessary for the disciple before he can start on the inner path.

This Upanishad occupies a very important place in the whole of the Upanishadic literature. It has been traced back by scholars to the Rig Veda, where the boy Kumara who visited Yama was instructed by the latter about the new chariot, wheelless and one-poled, fashioned with mind, and turning on all sides. The identification of Vedic Kumara with Nachiketas of this Upanishad has not been universally accepted; the latest scholar to deal with the theory is Kapali Shastri, who writing in the Advent (Vol. III) gave all its pros and cons. But, in any event, there is no doubt about a subsequent reference in the Kathaka section of the Taittiriya Brahmana, where this story as described in the Upanishad is given for the first time. Our Upanishad is generally regarded as a mine of mystic lore and a masterpiece of

esoteric learning. But the general reader usually finds it difficult to follow the language used by the old teachers. The free use of concrete symbols and images,—and that too of double significance one exoteric and the other esoteric—and the epic elevation of the truths in which the Rishis moved tend to make such teachings a bit hard to the modern reader. The Upanishad is not a book elaborating an intellectual system of metaphysical speculation but is an intensely practical discipline, under veiled symbols, revealed by the Guru to the initiate. It is not to be understood properly when taught by an inferior type of teacher, and unless taught by another there is no path to to it, for, affirms the Upanishad, it is unreachable by argument, being subtler even than the subtle. (II.8.)

The esteem and importance in which the Rishis of old held this Upanishad is brought home to us, when we remember that Bhagvan Vyasa in the Gita quotes more lines from this than from any other known piece of spiritual literature. It is remarkable that the imperishable yoga of the Bhagavad Gita was given by Vivaswan, the Sun-God, the luminous Master of the truth supreme to the father of the human race, (*Vivasvan manave praha*) while this Upanishadic lore of occult wisdom and yoga, (it is styled Adhyatma Yoga in verse 12 of chapter II), was given by Vivaswan's son Dharmaraja or Yama, the Restrainer, the unerring judge of truth to Nachiketas, the newly awakened Psyche, who is reborn from out of the mystic death of the natural being, and who has come up to the front-light, seeking spiritualisation and ultimate transformation. We must therefore approach our Upanishad not only with the help given to us by the old commentators but also with the light shed by modern writers like Sri Krishna Prem in his illuminating "Yoga of the Kathopanishad" and Kapali Shastri in his revealing "Readings from the Upanishads."

As regards the qualifications for the higher knowledge our Upanishad nowhere lays down explicitly what they are, but if we analyse the teaching with some care our diligence will be rewarded.

What then is the substance of the story of the Upanishad? Vajashravas, a rich orthodox Brahmin of note, seeking heavenly felicities performs a sacrifice but, like so many conformists with the letter of the law, gives away only old and infirm, sterile and useless cattle. His son Nachiketas, who was of a reflective turn of mind, becomes dissatisfied with this empty and soulless ceremony and asks his father repeatedly to whom he would give away himself, the son. The father, perhaps a little irritated, replied "to Death do I give thee." Accordingly, Nachiketas goes to the abode of Yama or Death, but the latter being absent he has to wait there three nights without any food. Yama, realising on his return that he had unwittingly made a guest fast in his halls for three days, grants him any three boons at his choice. Nachiketas prays, first, that when he returns to his father, the latter might recognise and wel-

come him with peace and joy. For his second boon, he prays that he might be taught the mysteries of the sacred Heavenly Fire which bestows bliss and immortality, and which is the Bridge that leads to the fearless other shore for those who wish to cross. (III. 2.) These were readily granted. Then said Nachiketas, " There is this doubt about the man who is (dead?) liberated, some saying he exists, others that he does not. Teach me this. This is my third boon." Yama hesitates, makes excuses on the ground of the subtlety and difficulty of the subject and then tests the boy with temptations of worldly enjoyments. Finding him firm in his aspiration for truth, and utterly unconcerned with material joys, Yama gives him detailed instructions and a glimpse of the Truth, which is the main preoccupation of the Upanishad.

The first qualification which the Upanishad stresses is undoubtedly the necessity or quality of Shraddha. It is said "*Kumaram shraddha avivesha*", faith entered into the youth, and he therefore reflected, *Sa amanyata*. Again when he chose the second boon the Upanishad says, *Shraddhanaya mahyam prabruhi*, teach that to me who am full of faith. This Shraddha is faith, aspiration, a will to believe and live steadfast in what one believes. It is the basis and foundation of all our efforts and without it they have no substance or reality. Whatever is done without faith or Shraddha is *asat*, falsity; it is nought, here or hereafter. By our faith we create our own truth of existence, and we are therefore the architects of our life. What we insistently believe in with faith, into that we tend to grow and develop. *Ya mati sa gati* is the pregnant aphorism of Ashtavakra. Dealing with the verse relating to Shraddha in the Gita, Sri Aurobindo says (Essays. Vol. II. p. 290), "This Purusha, this soul in man is, as it were, made of Shraddha, a faith, a will to be, a belief in itself and existence, and whatever is that will, faith or constituting belief in him, he is that and that is he." This faith is a support from above, says he elsewhere, "it is the brilliant shadow thrown by a secret life that exceeds the intellect and its data; it is the heart of a hidden knowledge that is not at the mercy of immediate appearance. Our faith, persevering, will be justified in its works and will be lifted and transfigured at last into the self-revelation of a divine knowledge." (The Synthesis of Yoga, Ch. XI.) The Shraddha or faith which, even though no bigger than a tiny mustard seed, can move mountains of disbelief and difficulties and can even transform a sinner into a sage, is the grand word of this Upanishad.

The second qualification is what is indicated in the words, *Sa amanyata*, he reflected. A mere blind faith is not asked for, it cannot be sufficient or effective. If that alone were required, the father had evidently plenty of it. Vajashravas gave away his wealth and possessions because he had the necessary faith in the efficacy of his sacrifice. He was, of course, blindly clinging to the outward shell of forms and ceremonies, and his faith was soulless and formal. What is required is the reflective turn of mind. This is the quality

of *Viveka*. By steady reflection one must gain the discrimination between the Self and the not-Self, and fix the mind on the Self which alone is the Truth. One must, therefore, become a seeker after true wisdom. We must note the significance of the word *Vidyabhipsi* (II.4) used by Yama. Nachiketas has become a seeker after real enlightenment or illumination, which is above the levels of mere intellectual knowledge. Vidya in this context and elsewhere in the Upanishads means the consciousness of Unity, while Avidya means the consciousness of multiplicity. Vidya leads one from death to immortality, while Avidya leads from death to death.

Another quality that is obviously essential is "abhayam" or fearlessness. There is none so much dreaded by the mortal as Yama, the terrible Death-God. He is the great universal slayer and also stern judge who admits no exceptions or exemptions in his code of death. One has to tread the dark path and pick his way, alone and solitary, through the dark belt of death to the Light beyond, and this requires fearlessness and courage. But the make-up of the ordinary mortal consists to a large extent of fear,—to a larger extent than we suspect—fear of losing one's name, fame, wealth, possessions, dear ones or of illness and death. At every step we are literally distracted and driven by this all-pervading and insistent sense of fear. The Gita while describing the Rajayogic meditation lays down *Vigatabhi* (free from fear) as a necessary qualification, and it later puts down *abhayam* as the first quality in its enumeration of Daivi Sampat. The aspirant has to get rid of this corroding fear; unshaken confidence in the path and strong faith in the ultimate victory must drive away every sense of fear. The timid (balahina) cannot attain the goal. "Once you enter the Path of Yoga you must get rid of all fears—the fears of your mind, the fears of your vital, the fears of your body which are lodged in its very cells.... One who seeks the transformation and is a follower of the Path, must become through and through fearless, not to be touched or shaken by anything whatever in any part of his nature." (*Words of the Mother*, p. 117). It should be noticed that it is by *viveka* that Nachiketas overcomes the recoil felt by him when the father pronounced the decree "To Death do I give thee." He reflects that numerous persons have gone to death before him; that among the living he would now be the first to go to him; and that in the natural course many persons in the future will be succeeding him in the eternal procession to the God of death. After all, humanity is like the grain or the corn on the earth (Shasyamiva) which sprout out of the earth, grow upon it for a little time and then die out, only to sprout up once again. In this way Nachiketas gets rid of all fear and steadfastly and with a smile on his lips he 'dies' to his father and his wealth and this wide sunlit world, and goes through darkness to Yama himself.

This gives the clue to the next requirement or qualification of the

aspirant. One must Die and go to Yama himself. This seems to be the esoteric way of saying that you must die to the world of inferior truth, and that the inner soul or psyche standing behind the threefold human vehicle of matter, life and mind should rise and respond to the higher truth-consciousness. Yama is the son of Vivaswan, the Sun-God. According to the revelations made by Sri Aurobindo of the secrets of Vedic symbolism, we know that the symbol of the Sun is associated with the higher Light and Truth. "He is the master of the Supreme Truth, the creator or manifestor of all things and fosterer, enlightener of souls." (*Hymns to the Mystic Fire*). Yama the son naturally stands for the same symbolism, and in one place (*Isha Upanishad* p. 98) the same great Maharshi has even identified the Son and the Father. "For Surya is Yama the ordainer or controller who assures the law, the dharma". Here Nachiketas, resurrected out of his lower life is now standing in the presense of Yama who in the context is emphatically the "enlightener of souls." The death of Nachiketas after Shraddha and Viveka entered into him means the death and annihilation of the ignorant ego of the lower self, which is "the lynch-pin of the wheel of delusion", and his appearance in the lighted halls of Yama means the contact of the true spiritual psychic personality with the Light of Truth Consciousness. The veils which envelop the divine spark in the cavern of the inner heart, the thumb-like Chaitya Purusha, are unloosed, uncovered and discarded (which is their death) and the flaming inner soul stands in the presence of the Guru seeking initiation to the higher wisdom. The significance of the word Nachiketas has to be taken note of; it means what is unperceived or what is pure spirit. Again it is not without significance that the seer of the Upanishad has called the rising flame of Nachiketas, Vaishvanara, the universal fire, the fire that feeds on all and consumes everything and the seer of the Integral Yoga has called the same inner spark the "psychic fire". "The multifarious experiences of various lives are as fuel to the Inner Fire—this Psychic Agni, which is just a spark or thin tongue at the outset of the human evolutionary course; but with the addition of fuel from life to life this Fire flames up, indeed becomes ultimately a conflagration that burns and purifies the entire outer vehicle and transforms it into radiant matter—a fit receptacle, incarnation of the Supernal Light." (*Lines of the Descent of Consciousness*, Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual, No.II). This sentence sums up the developing stages of the psyche. Thus when the ego-impelled, out-going view disappears, and the self, dead to the outward-gazing consciousness (paranchi khani), is reborn in the inner consciousness of the psyche, the soul impelled by single-minded aspiration seeks the divine in the form of the Guru and implores like Nachiketas for illumination. This stage, we may note here, seems to correspond to one of the steps on the path of the Integral Yoga which Sri Aurobindo has

termed 'psychicisation'. The death of Nachiketas is therefore significant as an essential stage in the discipline of the sadhaka.

With it is intimately connected the next curious incident in the story that, before Yama actually appeared on the scene, Nachiketas had to undergo a fast for three nights in his abode. This in the first place obviously indicates the necessity for patience and steadfastness without which no yoga is possible. Though the ordeal of waiting at the gate, apparently unnoticed and neglected for three days and nights was a severe one, Nachiketas did not get impatient or depressed or discouraged but the qualities of *shat-sampatti* prevented his spirits from revolting or retreating. But the incident has a deeper significance as well. It indicates a withdrawal of the soul from the contacts or bonds of the threefold formations of the human personality in the inner physical, inner vital and inner mental sheaths (the outer or grosser bodies, we have to assume, have been destroyed by the death). And the pure inner fire alone now remains after the fast. A further stage for a rapid and upward psychic growth and evolution has thus been reached. The full psychic transformation, the complete emergence in the pure psychic way of the Antaryamin or inner controller, as the all-controlling sovereign force and the separation of the Antaratma Purusha from the threefold bodies, like the drawing out of a reed from its outer sheath (VI. 17) require as a condition precedent this 'fast'—this tranquilising purification of our three 'bodies', and the starving out of the turbulent movements of the distorted desire-self, manifesting in the three planes of consciousness. The reason is clear. The psychic when veiled in mind or vital or matter can only make a mixed, coloured or troubled approach to the Divine; while pure psyche, (Adhumaka Jyoti) Light without smoke, gives a direct, unmixed and spontaneous reception to the supramental influence, unspoiled by the distorting admixture of mental error, vital distortion or physical inertia. Therefore it follows that no attachment or lingering contact arising out of the life in these formations should be allowed and if any remains it should be starved out of existence.

The next requirement is one whcih is essential at every stage, and that is a total and sincere inner renunciation or Vairagya. Yama strongly tempts Nachiketas with the alternative boon of long-lived sons and grandsons, immense wealth of cattle, horses, elephants and gold, chariots, maidens and music, nay, even the sovereignty of the three worlds. (I. 23-25). But the stout-hearted youth firmly spurns these bewitching temptations and insists on being taught the highest secret as his third and last boon. Yama at length became pleased at the unshakable spirit of renunciation and the complete triumph over desires shown by the disciple, and compliments him on his having become a youth of right resolve (Satyadhriti) "by whom were not accepted those golden chains laden by which so many men sink down". (II.3). This renunciation should not be any outward sannyasa

or physical rejection. It is not a distaste for works or disgust of life that is wanted but a renunciation of *raga* and *dvesa*, a giving up of sensuous attachment or vital repulsion and not a refusal of work or activity. The Ishopanishad emphatically insists on action in the world, "doing verily works in the world one should wish to live a hundred years", and the Kathopanishad likewise requires an inner renunciation. The significance of the first boon which seemed at first a mere childish wish becomes noteworthy here. Nachiketas wishes that when he returns to the world from the abode of Death his father might recognise him and welcome him back with peace and joy. One interpretation of this boon which Kapali Shastri offers, viz., "A capacity by which he can come back from the higher plane to the physical, with the connection between this and the life beyond established, maintaining the thread of consciousness" must naturally be accepted as coming from a student of yoga and of esoteric wisdom. But to the ordinary reader another aspect not repugnant to the above seems also valid. If the world-shunning sannyasa or the ascetic recoil were the ideal held forth by this Upanishad, Nachiketas would never have prayed for this boon of earth-return with all its burdensome toil and tears and sweat, nor would he have cared for any demonstration of joy and welcome even from the father. Therefore this presupposes a return of Nachiketas to a life of action and work after his experience of heavenly bliss and spiritual illumination. It will be noticed that the Upanishad in its concluding portion insists only on an utter freedom from the heart-clinging attachments and on the breaking of the heart-knots here in this very life. The Upanishad while it bans evil conduct or *dushcharita* does not bar right action or *sucharita*, and it says that one who has not controlled his senses or his mind or has not attained peace, and one who has not turned away from wrong actions or evil conduct cannot attain the goal (II. 24). In other words a full control of the mind and conquest of desires and not cessation from works is the qualification required of the disciple.

Thus, it will be found, on an analysis of the indications found in the text that the qualifications deemed necessary for an aspirant as mentioned in later writings agree in the main with those found in the Kathopanishd. Difference in the emphasis on certain points should not be surprising, because the Upanishad being a practical treatise on the Path of the Initiate naturally emphasises only the essentials or prerequisites for the journey. The qualifications or conditions indicated in the mystic death and fast of Nachiketas however seem unique and if the interpretations submitted above are accepted as correct, they reveal a remarkable foreshadowing of the process of psychicisation which Sri Aurobindo, after a period of thirty years of inner creation and search, has laid down as an essential step in the path of his Integral or Supramental Yoga.

E. Govindan Nair

## REVIEW

**A MANUAL OF ETHICS**. *By Principal A. K. Trivedi.* Second Edition, pp.227+xxvi. Price Rs. 5/12. Published by Popular Book Depot, Lamington Road, Bombay 7.

Morality, said Plato, is an invention of the weak to chain the strong. Nature is 'red in tooth and claw' and morality, it is pointed out, is foreign to her intention. Yet moral principles and moral codes have proved indispensable for ordered society and continued to exert a powerful hold on man. Their history is as old as civilisation itself. Some even go to the extent of identifying Progress with the development of the range and depth of ethical conscience. An American author of note describes Ethics as 'the richest of the mansions of Philosophy....Philosophy lifts her varied knowledge into living wisdom for the guidance of mankind.' Codes of ethics have been evolved both in the East and the West. In the East, however, Morality has never been treated as something objectively different from life; in the West it has been more a built-up science, a systematisation of principles of human conduct as they are seen or ought to be. A study of the western methods of dealing with ethical problems, their evaluation of moral principles and sanctions, is interesting particularly with regard to concepts which are outside the way of the ancient Indian approach. We may find their analysis and reasonings somewhat unreal; their attempts at hasty generalisations from particulars may be annoying; we may miss, in their sharp and straight-eyed approaches to problems, the touch of the all-sided and comprehensive outlook that characterises the methods of Vedantic knowledge. Yet an acquaintance with the history and place of Ethics in Western thought is a necessary equipment for students of general philosophy of modern times in India. And Prof. Trivedi's handy Manual of Ethics is just the type of the book that kindles one's interest in the subject and provides a warm introduction to it.

In the introductory chapter the author gives a rapid survey of the problem and scope of Ethics. He is at pains to emphasise, what the moralist so often forgets, that 'the moral life is never *ultimate*'. We agree. But we cannot follow him when he says 'it is simply a phase of spiritual life' (p. 13) Spiritual life and moral life have hardly anything necessarily in common though much of the expressions of spirituality may be quite moral. The centre and range of each are different. Morality as such may occupy a great place in religious disciplines, but has an indifferent value for spiritual life which is essentially a-moral. History affords abundant testimony to the possibility, because of the actual fact, of confirmed sinners outflowering into renowned saints, possibly scandalising the moral consciousness of man.

The author then proceeds to examine the bases and fundamental concepts of Ethics—Kant's Categorical Imperative, Butler's 'Conscience' which was derided by Ruskin saying that the conscience of an individual 'may be the conscience of an ass'; the Universal Conscience which Aristotle called the Commonsense i.e. the sense common to all men, and which was termed as Intuition by Sidgwick.

The next section deals with important schools of thought that have sought to determine the ends that shape men's lives. Cyrenaicism, Epicurianism, Cynicism, Utilitarianism—each of these and many more are examined and their short-comings pointed out. Hedonism comes for trenchant criticism by the author. He denies that pleasure can be an end in itself. Pleasure can be 'a sense or a measure of value...not value itself' (p.72). While Hedonism as it is preached is certainly open to criticism, we cannot forget that there is a fundamental principle of *Ananda* (Delight) underlying the whole world-manifestation, *anandat sarvani jayante.* This truth is reflected, however dim and degraded, in the human being and is responsible for what is known as the pleasure-motive behind all human activity.

In the chapter on Moral Excellences, Prof. Trivedi has drawn a parallel between the Socratic view of Wisdom and the description of the *Sthita-prajna* in the Gita. We think the comparison is not happy, not permissible. For, the 'Wisdom' of the Greek sage has a wholly moral content while the connotation of Prajna in the phrase *sthita-prajna* is definitely spiritual. Such a man has transcended the moral plane, his consciousness is settled *sthita* in the awareness of the ultimate Reality, Brahman.

A separate chapter is devoted to the contribution of modern Indian thinkers to Indian philosophical thought. The sketches are necessarily brief, but all-too-brief, and inevitably some of the central aspects of their Thoughts tend to get overlooked. For instance, in his remarks about Sri Aurobindo's teachings, the author has doubtless missed the dynamic side of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga which he tries to describe. This Yoga is not, as the author seems to think, 'primarily interested in the practical aspect of the philosophy of realising the self' (p.178). That of course is there, but there is much more. Realisation of the Self is an indispensable step, not the goal. The riches of the Self are to be shared fully by all the members of one's being. Life is to be taken up anew, as a sacred trust, and lived in its entirety in the ways of the Spirit. Man's centre of life and action is sought to be shifted to a new base as a consequence of which he ceases to be the imperfect blundering creature he now is.

On page 179, there is an inaccuracy when the author states that Sahasradala 'opens to intuition through which the *overmind* contacts the *supermind.*' The fact is Intuition occupies a step far below the Overmind in

the hierarchy of the grades of Consciousness. Overmind has an almost direct contact with and is a delegated power of the Supermind. This terminology may be 'queer to modern psychologists'. But this classification and terminology are not based on speculative thought, they are founded on facts of spiritual realisations, on truths that yield themselves to the higher consciousness in the deeper layers of the being.

There is a critical study in the last section of some important Metaphysical Problems of Morality—the Problem of God, Problem of Evil, Problem of Freedom and Problem of Immortality. Discussing the problem of Evil the author dismisses the dualistic solutions as being opposed to the philosophic craving for system and unity and as inconsistent with the attitude of Religion which is optimistic. He examines the position of Leibnitz and the Absolutist Bosanquet and shows how the theory that this world is the best possible world and whatever evils there are are a necessary part in the process of devolopment (p.205) breaks down when it comes to application to life. The author himself is inclined towards Meliorism as the right attitude to life: if the world is not good, it is becoming better.

The author enters into the deep waters of the metaphysic of the Problem of Evil, and rightly remarks that 'a *detailed* solution of the problem of evil is out of question: firstly because with our imperfect reason we do not know what things are good for us, and secondly because we never foresee the full effects of any action on the world-process.' Here we may remark that since he has considered the subject of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy—nay, Yoga—he would have done well to indicate the lines on which Sri Aurobindo has dealt with this problem in his *magnum opus*, The Life Divine. We have no space, in this short review, to deal with this subject even in brief. But we may state this much that the question of Evil cannot be properly understood without a correct approach to the process of creation itself from the view-point of a metaphysics which must be based not on speculative hypothesis, but on a hypothesis warranted by intuitive realisations of supra-intellectual truths.

The book has a useful vocabulary of Ethical terms with their Sanskrit equivalents appended to it. The few controvertible points we were prompted to take note of in the course of this review do not detract from the value of the book. On the other hand, Prof. Trivedi's claim in the Preface that this is an introductory manual of Ethics is more than justified. It is a fitting introduction to the subject; while it is undoubtedly a suitable text-book for University students, it is quite informative, and sure to profit the general reader as well.

M. P.

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